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Anti-Government Movements and the Revitalization Process: An Examination of Anthony F.C. Wallace's Theory of Revitalization As Applied to Domestic Terrorist and Extremist Groups

by
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ABSTRACT

This article employs a case study approach to examine the usefulness of Anthony F.C. Wallace's classic theory of group revitalization as it relates to terrorist and extremist movements. Wallace's theory, while well-known in anthropological circles, has only rarely been applied to the study of contemporary anti-statist groups. This oversight is unfortunate since the theory helps to account for the growth of these groups without relying on reductionist explanations. The central case of the West Virginia Mountaineer Militia, a radical militia group of the mid-1990s, is examined here in some detail to consider the precepts of revitalization theory. Other movements of a similar style are more briefly addressed.

INTRODUCTION

New scholarship on 1990s American militia activism has broadened our understanding of the factors that propelled its growth in the last decade, along with illuminating militia antecedents in radical Right-wing groups appearing cyclically in the twentieth-century.[1] There were several precipitating incidents which contributed to the regeneration of the American nativist, paramilitary tradition in the form of recent militia activity. The election of Bill Clinton and the 1993 passage of the Brady Gun-Control Bill played a role, but the key events involved the actions taken by authorities against the family of Randy Weaver at Ruby Ridge, Idaho in 1992, and the 51-day federal police siege of David Koresh's Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas in early 1993.[2] These confrontations between the federal government and private citizens, in particular, sparked the growth of widespread anti-government sentiment among a collection of newly-formed militia organizations in the middle years of the last decade.

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Exact figures on nationwide militia membership have never been available, however, most estimates of its size during its peak ranged from 10,000-50,000 active participants.[3] There are two principal reasons for the information gap. One has to do with the loosely-organized structure and informal recruitment methods used by most militias, which makes precise estimates on numerical size an impossibility. The second reason is that militias have often been loosely categorized along with other Right-wing protest groups that do not demonstrate a penchant for paramilitaria, but which harbor a similar socio-political ideology of populist radicalism characterized by distrust of the federal government, strong support for property and gun-ownership rights, and adherence to anti-government conspiracy beliefs.[4] Anti-taxation, constitutionalist, sovereign citizen, and other types of Right-wing protest organizations have been popularly linked together with militias under the umbrella category of "the patriot movement" for the purposes of labeling expedience. But, the multiplicity of ideas and disparate agendas within this movement have always made the label something of a forced fit for all the group types encompassed by it. Private "watchdog" organizations monitoring the general trends and activities of the broadly defined American patriot movement estimate that it was comprised of over 800 separate groups in 1996, a figure which was said to have fallen to 143 by 2003 due to members' disillusionment, fear of arrest, and the likelihood of group drift toward more unobtrusive "underground" organizations of an extremist nature. In part, the arrests and trials in 1996 and 1997 of a few individuals associated with militias on weapons and conspiracy charges probably contributed to the overall decline.[5] Of the patriot aggregations still in existence, approximately 50 are considered to be militia groups.[6] Further decline in organized militia activity may well have occurred as a result of the events of 11 September 2001. The terrorist attacks on the US seemed to have had the effect of further quelling demonstrations of militia outrage against domestic enemies and, instead, acted to channel group sentiments in the direction of the country's war against terrorism.[7]

Although the militias were often hyperbolically cast during the 1990s as a major public danger[8] – a perspective which owed largely to the mistaken media opinion that they were involved with the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and the 1996 bombing of the Atlanta Summer Olympic Games[9] – there were several incidents when the most extreme among them planned acts of anti-government violence. One of these cases involved the West Virginia Mountaineer Militia, a paramilitary group whose leaders embarked upon a guerilla war strategy to be used against the US government. My intention, as conveyed below in the brief case study of this militia organization, is to draw attention to the psycho-dynamics at work within the group as its motivations turned in the direction of violence. The focus here is influenced by the argument that the ideologies adopted (and threats perceived) by domestic extremists of all types need to be understood within the context of their own logic.[10] In this vein more attention could profitably be directed to examining the evolving beliefs of radical, anti-government groups in

an effort to better understand the organizational thought processes through which decisions to resort to protest violence are made. Analyses directed toward this objective should assist in shedding light on the distinctive ideational characteristics that define, and set apart, the most militant and violent-prone domestic extremist organizations.

The West Virginia Mountaineer Militia

Unlike the more prominent militia organizations that were the focus of much media interest in the mid-1990s, the West Virginia Mountaineer Militia received little public attention during its short-lived existence. The group, which came into being in 1994, generally succeeded in avoiding public scrutiny and remained a low-profile entity within the constellation of American militias. Its period of anonymity came to an abrupt end, however, in October 1996. At this time, seven of its members were arrested by federal authorities on various charges for their roles in conspiring to bomb the newly-built FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Complex near Clarksburg, West Virginia. The event attracted national news coverage and startled those residing in the region. What is most interesting about the case is the manner in which leadership elements of the Mountaineer Militia soon gravitated from an organizational philosophy of defensive opposition to perceived government efforts at restricting the liberties of US citizens, to an offensive strategy that included planning for the use of terrorism. This transition occurred quickly and was spurred along by 56-year old militia leader Floyd Looker's belief that the federal government was poised to embark on a repressive campaign designed to disarm gun-owning Americans. This preliminary step on the part of the government was to be followed, he felt, by the massive internment of citizens deemed to be "resisting patriots" at concentration camps located throughout the country. For Looker, who spoke openly of these conspiratorial plots at organizational gatherings in 1994 and 1995, these actions were to be only the initial phases of the creation of the New World Order, a larger insidious plan devised by corrupt American officials and a coalition of foreign leaders to strip the country of its sovereignty.[11]

The West Virginia Mountaineer Militia case should be of interest to students of both radical movements and domestic terrorism for a number of reasons. First, the group was part of a disproportionately small sub-set of militia organizations whose members either attempted or carried out acts of terrorist violence in the mid-1990s. Included among the most noteworthy of these organizations were the Minnesota Patriots Council, the Militia-at-Large of the Republic of Georgia, and an Arizona-based group calling itself "the Viper Team."[12] Second, the organizational dynamics of Looker's militia may offer insights into the ways that violent activism can be shrouded in some radical protest groups. In the case of the West Virginia Mountaineer Militia, a highly ideological cadre emerged that functioned as a separate and more militant "secret society" within the larger, and non-violent, group. And third, given the organization's developmental record, it

is clear that group goals and objectives (as determined by leaders) shifted quickly in new and previously uncharted directions. This change was fueled by the key actors' growing absorption with luxuriant, anti-government conspiracy theories and resulted in the militia's role being reshaped into that of a subversive guerilla force.[13] Despite the dramatic nature of the failed bombing plan undertaken by its key members, the group faded from the limelight of public attention almost immediately.

In order to address the West Virginia Mountaineer Militia's path to violent activism, it is necessary to first discuss the evolutionary growth of the organization. Particular attention is paid here to the movement's collective beliefs and especially to those of Floyd Looker, whose anti-government philosophy was largely responsible for placing a splinter faction within the group on a route leading to a strategy of combat with perceived foes. This foray into the development of a crystallized group perspective is followed by an effort at explaining the militia's shifting impressions of the environing culture, as well as an examination of its leadership's descent into a dissident underground community divorced from the majoritarian outlook of mainstream society. To put into context the actions that led to the group's formation and the eventual adoption by some of its members of a violent strategy, I consider the usefulness of an understudied concept with roots in the field of social anthropology. In an important 1956 article published in *American Anthropologist*, Anthony F.C. Wallace employed the concept of "revitalization," a term connoting a fast-paced, intra-group change producing a new gestalt, to account for the sudden rise of some countercultural movements. These collectivities, according to Wallace, could be defined in a myriad of ways depending upon the disciplinary background of the researcher and the key features of the movements themselves. Thus, while the terms "nativist," "revolutionary," "millennial," "reformist," and others might be descriptively used, they denote a special type, or class, of social movement that pursues the construction of its own culture and, hence, its transformative re-birth as a new social system.[14] Wallace's theory of revitalization has a direct, if much underexplored, application to the field of terrorist studies insofar as violent extremist groups are not immune from the same yearnings and dream-like, utopian visions of future change experienced by more mainstream social, religious, and political movements. The theory's anthropological foundations are uniquely well-suited to discern such impulses from a cross-cultural context. As will be discussed later, the innovative ideas advanced by Wallace some time ago provide useful insights into the ideological motivations of oppositional groups, an area of examination which has not drawn sufficient attention in the more contemporary (and dominant) approaches to research on domestic terrorism and extremism.

THE EVOLUTION OF AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT GROUP

The West Virginia Mountaineer Militia was first promoted in the summer months of 1994. Floyd Looker, a college-educated small businessman and

Vietnam veteran, scheduled an initial series of public meetings at this time in Clarksburg (pop. 18,000) and some surrounding towns for the purpose of forming a citizen militia. Although Looker was not known as an especially outgoing or charismatic figure by locals, he was reported to have become totally absorbed with the idea of creating a state militia.[15] At the outset of his efforts, Looker claimed that the state was in need of a volunteer, civilian group to serve the state in the event of "emergency disasters." While vague in his statements to prospective members about the militia's objectives, Looker nonetheless struck a popular chord with regional audiences concerned with issues such as gun-owner rights and the apparent heavy-handedness of federal authorities at incidents taking place at Ruby Ridge, Idaho and Waco, Texas. Both of these events served as catalysts for the formation of militia groups in the US, many of which believed that the government had undertaken a plan to declare martial law and relinquish American sovereignty to the United Nations. While there was considerable variation within the newly-formed national movement as to how this goal would be achieved, the ecumenical claim was that American leaders had "sold-out" to the one-world government scheme of the international organization, which was believed to be at work instituting a New World Order plan of supranational rule.[16] Ruby Ridge and Waco nicely dovetailed with this generalized version of the conspiratorial New World Order theory since the deaths of members of the Weaver family and the catastrophic loss of life at the Branch Davidian compound took place in operations directed by federal authorities. Both incidents were widely viewed by the militias as cases where armed dissidents represented a threat to the gun-control efforts of the US government and, by extension, to the United Nations, which was thought to be behind a worldwide effort at disarming citizens as a step in the direction of establishing a global socialist dictatorship.[17]

Even at this early stage in his militia's development, Looker appeared to have subscribed to the New World Order theory's central tenet that the federal government was waging a covert war against the people. But he largely shielded his convictions in his public talks and, instead, emphasized the "civic duty" that a state militia might perform. Many of those from the small mountain towns and hamlets who made the effort to turn out to hear him, however, knew about the events at Ruby Ridge and Waco and, often, were at least mildly sympathetic with the opaque anti- government tenor of his message.[18]

By fall 1994, the group had grown to include about 200 formal members.[19] In the months that followed, Looker succeeded in establishing an integrated network of members in the fledgling group arranged by geographical districts comprised of several state counties. Having appointed himself "Commanding General" of the militia, he designated a dozen "district commanders" to supervise the general members. Despite the existence of a 1986 West Virginia law prohibiting the formation of private paramilitary groups, Looker convinced the membership that its actions were entirely legal. In his idiosyncratic reading of the West Virginia State Code, the "unorganized militia" mentioned in the law was

not the National Guard but, rather, all able-bodied state residents between the ages of 16 and 50.[20] His creative interpretation of the State Code purportedly gave the West Virginia Mountaineer Militia a prominent role in assisting county sheriffs and state emergency management officials with planning and coordinating public responses to unspecified disasters that might occur.

Throughout the remainder of 1994 and into the summer of 1995, the militia's main activity involved participation in organized training sessions at a 600-acre farm in Lewis County owned by a group member. While not deviating entirely from the emergency response mission he had openly advocated for the militia, Looker introduced a new function for the group at the farm that included armed self-defense. An interviewee who took part in these exercises indicated that the primary emphasis at the gatherings was placed on "defensive action," a tactical organization plan declared by Looker to be useful if federal authorities attempted to disband the group.[21] While Looker publicly held to the position that the militia's purpose was to assist the state's citizenry during times of crisis, similar to a relief organization, some of the training given to the members at the farm was of a paramilitary nature and included training sessions in marksmanship and firearms, hand-to-hand combat, and drills involving the guerilla-style use of demolitions against specified targets.[22] It merits attention, though, that in the early stages of its development the West Virginia Mountaineer Militia was still regarded by its general membership and leaders as a non-violent movement comprised of law-abiding citizens. This group-held perception remained in place because it appeared to the members that the organization was simply constructing sensible contingency plans to defend individual liberties if ever these would be threatened by the government.[23]

THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING AND THE CLARKSBURG FBI CENTER PLOT

The group's steadily growing paramilitary posturing was attributable to an apparent shift in the threat perceptions held by Looker and a handful of his closest associates. This change was directly linked to Looker's own impressions of the environing culture, which he believed to be dominated by a repressive government intent on using force to silence dissent. His ideas, and those of the key militia leaders, were sharply honed by an alternative communications network relied upon for "accurate" accounts of national and world events.[24] Among the trusted channels of information tapped into were short-wave radio broadcasts of anti-government patriot programs, internet sites set up by other militia and patriot organizations, politically "fringe" mail order books and pamphlets, and *The Spotlight,* a Right-wing tabloid published by the Liberty Lobby, a controversial populist organization which had a long reputation of supporting political and social platforms of an extremist nature.[25] The ideas absorbed from these, and other, non-mainstream information sources validated for Looker and his top-ranking deputies their deeply-rooted fears of the government and their notion

that a macro-level global conspiracy was unfolding which would ultimately gain realization in the arrival of a tyrannical world-state. None of these heterodox concepts was exactly new. In fact, the bellicosity of the 1990s version of the globalist New World Order theory replicated all the key features of the earlier Cold War-era conspiracy theory adhered to in some form by American far Right groups since the 1950s.[26] The overarching theme in the message was always that secret elites had gained control over the economic, social, and political sources of power in the country and were working subversively to hand control of the US over to foreign domination.[27] Following the 1991 political dissolution of the Soviet Union, which for far Rightists had traditionally been the linchpin in the communist world-takeover plot, the object of concern shifted to the UN Although militarily weak, financially insolvent, and politically disorganized, the UN was strangely cast by patriot groups and militias as the new international juggernaut seeking to impose one-world authority. Permutations of the anticipated scheme were advanced by its believers and included superheated stories about the secret deployment of UN Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force troops in remote parts of the US, as well as the recruitment of violent gang members by government agencies to help enforce order when the time arrived to strip American citizens of their constitutional rights.[28]

Looker and his commanders accepted a standardized variation of the globalist plot doctrine that had for many years gained acceptance with anti-government groups on the Right. For these leaders of the Mountaineer Militia, the roots of "the conspiracy" were to be found in an obscure, secret meeting that was said to have taken place on Jekyll Island, Georgia in 1913.[29] According to this revisionist account of American economic history, influential bankers, government officials, and politicians consorted at the Jekyll Island meeting to obtain private control of the country's banking system and money supply through the establishment of the Federal Reserve System. While Congress actually created the Federal Reserve to stabilize the economy, Right-wing conspiratorialists have claimed that wealthy elites with internationalist objectives served as the guiding force behind its development. As the legend goes, these financial masterminds used their considerable power to secure control of the nation's banking system and, thus, better position themselves to command America's financial resources.[30] In the process, it is believed that the proto-globalists who conspired to construct the Federal Reserve managed to destroy America's sovereignty by effectively turning it over to "international bankers and financiers" seeking to draw the country into a condition of economic serfdom.[31]

Looker's lieutenants in the militia took it upon themselves to research the history of the Jekyll Island conspiracy, a treachery thought to have laid the groundwork for the later creation of powerful internationalist associations, including the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission, as well as to the birth of the United Nations. The findings derived from these "investigations" led the key members of the militia to believe that the country

had long ago been targeted for absorption into a unified global entity controlled by the powerbrokers and policy elites of the Western world.[32] So that attention might be brought to the evolving scheme, and to alert fellow patriots to the excesses that US government agencies were alleged to have committed in its furtherance, the group produced a video entitled *America Under Siege*, which highlighted the illegal actions American law enforcement organizations and the military had taken against its own people. The amateurish video production, which was used by the militia in its recruiting efforts, focused on the surveillance of US citizens and patriot groups by a fleet of unmarked, black helicopters.[33] Having become for "resisting" patriots a representative symbol of US government oppression, claims about the secretive intelligence-gathering work of the ubiquitous vehicles were routinely featured in Right-wing, anti-government publications by the mid-1990s. Like other militia groups and their like-minded sympathizers who produced this literature, the Mountaineers were convinced that the black helicopter fleet was the equivalent of a national mercenary force functioning at the order of the executive branch or, in the event of a declared crisis, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).[34]

Until the 19 April 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, Looker had maintained a low-profile compared to some other state militia leaders. Whereas outspoken luminaries in the militia orbit, such as John Trochman of the Militia of Montana and Norman Olsen of the Michigan Militia, had freely expressed their anti-government views to the media over the events at Ruby Ridge and Waco,[35] Looker avoided taking a more visible public position and remained out of the national spotlight. His reticence ended, however, immediately after the Oklahoma City bombing, an act of terrorism which took the lives of 168 men, women, and children in the city's Murrah Federal Building. The tragedy became the occasion for Looker's transition to the status of militia celebrity. He took advantage of the media's militia feeding-frenzy to report his knowledge about the massive conspiracy he saw unfolding in America, a prognostication that was fast gaining currency with other militia and patriot organizations in the aftermath of the bombing.[36]

The foundations of the Oklahoma City bombing conspiracy theory rested on the conviction that the government itself had orchestrated the explosion of the Murrah Federal Building in order to put into action a pre-arranged plan to crackdown on patriot groups. Even prior to the destruction of the Murrah Building, this idea had already been discussed among the key Mountaineers, who reportedly were "scared and anxious about the next step the government would take to come after the militias."[37] As with some others in the patriot fold, the leadership element of Looker's militia accepted the radical notion then circulating that the bombing fit the same *modus operandi* as the Reichstag fire in the period after Hitler's accession to power in pre-War Germany.[38] In this case, the Nazis had set fire to the German Parliament in order to more convincingly scapegoat and politically ostracize their enemies, upon whom the blaze was blamed. Some fearful

members of the Mountaineers left the group at this point feeling that the potential was high for an all-out government assault on militias. Those representing the majority views of the organization were "sickened" by the violent act perpetrated at Oklahoma City and frustrated that the media continued to pillory militia groups by linking them to it.[39]

Although he portrayed his own movement to inquisitive reporters as harmless, Looker's belief concerning the government's role in the bombing led him to adopt steps that charted the group's path to violence. His own philosophical shift from protest and defense of civil liberties to aggression against the enemy came hard and fast. The blast that sheared the face off the Murrah Building affirmed for Looker that government officials working to institute the New World Order would use every means imaginable to realize their objectives. Believing that a declaration of martial law would soon be issued, Looker became panicked about what he saw as a forthcoming operation by government forces to occupy regions of the country thought to present obstacles to the creation of a police state. In his estimation, the Mountaineers might perform the same function as the French resistance fighters of World War II or, in a more contemporary vein, the Chechen guerillas combating the presence of Russian troops. These cases, he felt, showed that determined opposition could disrupt the advance and occupation of larger forces by adopting a quick-strike style and the use subversive tactics.[40]

For the small and most radical anti-government faction of the Mountaineers, Looker's adoption of exotic conspiratorial ideas to explain the terrorist blast further immersed it into the post-Oklahoma City bombing anti-government "cultic milieu,"[41] the ideological parameters of which were defined by opposition to the tyranny of the New World Order. Functioning for some time as a private militia within the larger organization, Looker's small core contingent quietly conducted themselves in the manner of an exclusive, secret society without disclosing their agenda to the general membership. For this handful of members, which never numbered more than 10, the federal government was seen to be poised to brutally crush New World Order dissenters throughout the country and put into place a new regime depriving citizens of their civil liberties.[42] The heterodox ideas that percolated through this elite inner-circle were, in many respects, identical to those being circulated by other patriot groups in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing. But the difference was that Looker's core group of Mountaineers (along with only a marginal number of other hardened patriots dispersed across the country), actually worked themselves into a "battle-ready" state because of these notions. Among these were stories about the government's plan to soon declare martial law on the basis of Presidential "Executive Orders." According to a group insider who revealed that Looker's inner-circle carefully researched the emergency scenarios facing the militia, it was thought that the government would invoke an obscure national emergency plan called "Rex 84" to round up and detain militia activists across the country.[43] While this authentic Reagan-era directive was actually designed to provide tem-

porary relocation centers at military installations for illegal aliens crossing the Mexican border, the radicalized Mountaineers re-interpreted it as a plot to incarcerate dissidents who opposed the developing totalitarian state.[44] It was felt that this initial objective toward the goal of the new socialist-authoritarian one-world government system would be facilitated by the backing of UN troops already pre-positioned on American soil, a detachment of which was thought to be based in nearby western Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest.[45]

The Mountaineer inner-circle's descent into an alternative-reality world of incandescent conspiracy placed it on a path which made more likely its shift to offensive violence. Foreseeing an imminent crackdown on the group by authorities, the band embarked on a counter-plan which Looker loosely based on his impression of the unconventional warfare strategy adopted by Chechen guerillas in the early 1990s opposing Russian Army forces.[46] The effort involved reaching across state lines in Ohio and Pennsylvania to acquire C-4, TNT, and other explosives from sympathetic patriots with experience in demolitions.[47] These explosives were to be used in the bombing of federal targets in West Virginia as the time approached for the anticipated confrontation. In addition to stockpiling the explosives to be used in the forthcoming bombing operations, Looker and his closest militia associates organized an assassination team called "The Sons of Liberty," which was to be sent into action when the government appeared to be starting its anti-dissident campaign.[48] This "special operations" unit of Mountaineers was to target, among other state and national officials, Senator Jay Rockefeller and Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan.[49] In spring 1996, when members of Looker's group began crossing the state border into Pennsylvania to enlist support from nearby patriots with the guerilla preparations, plans were discussed relating to the killing of these and other figures, some of whom were associated with the Trilateral Commission. The assassination plots were seen as a means to impair by "decapitation" the New World Order plan and to send the message that dissident opposition to the globalist scheme was formidable.[50]

Believing that the time was drawing near when US officials would impose martial law, Looker and the inner-core of Mountaineers prepared to engage the agents of the New World Order with violence. Looker had to point no further than to the outskirts of Clarksburg to pinpoint a target that he felt symbolized the insidious nature of the government's unfolding scheme. The FBI's newly-built $200 million Criminal Identification Center, which helped expedite law enforcement background investigations, represented for Looker the greatest regional threat to American citizens. Operating on the basis of their fears, several key militia members began plans to bomb the local installation. According to one of Looker's associates, the militia leader was obsessed with the mammoth 1,700-employee facility and came to see it as a key New World Order intelligence nerve center that would provide government officials with information on patriots thought to be security risks.[51]

Through 1996, Looker and the "secret militia" leaders continued to prepare for unconventional warfare against the government. These efforts involved both discussions about developing a fuel-air bomb, a powerful explosive device designed to detonate above ground after being dropped from a plane,[52] as well as the purchase of plastic explosives and detonators from individuals with militia ties in nearby states.[53] It remained unknown to Looker, however, that his private army had already been infiltrated by informants who were providing information to the FBI. The inside information on the coterie's planning led federal agents to set up a "sting" operation in order to arrest the participants. Posing as a representative for an anonymous Islamic terrorist movement, an undercover federal agent approached Looker in February 1996 to ask the militia leader whether he might be willing to sell either intelligence or demolitions material to assist the group in destroying the facility.[54] Although Looker considered himself a patriot, federal authorities rightly assumed that he was opportunistic and calculated that he would cooperate, believing that the fictitious group represented by the middleman had a better chance than his militia of carrying out the bombing.[55] Having recently acquired from a militia associate the blueprints and detailed area maps of the FBI complex, he agreed to sell the materials to the undercover agent for $50,000.[56] Authorities waited to move until additional evidence could be obtained on the bomb plot, but in October 1996, FBI agents arrested Looker along with the co-conspirators and charged them under the provisions of a new anti-terrorist law passed after the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center.

THE GROUP DYNAMICS OF REVITALIZATION THEORY

The beliefs held by Looker and the inner-core of Mountaineers never wavered in intensity and, in fact, grew even more luxuriant in their detachment from the rather standardized versions of underground "truth" observed by many patriot organizations. In the end, assessing that war was on the horizon, the believers mobilized to preemptively strike against the New World Order they saw taking control of the country. That the cadre followed this fast-paced route from objective reality and, as a matter of calculation, turned to violence to combat its impression of an impending disaster separates this incident in kind from all but a small number of other American Right-wing movements of the period. The case offers some opportunity for theoretical discussion concerning violent anti-government groups.

Since the 1950s, the academic study of Rightist movements, in general, has revolved around a small handful of theories addressing causes for their growth. The main thrust of this body of research pointed to the "marginalization" of Right-wing extremists, attributing it (among other factors) to deprived economic standing, socio-political alienation, and generally low-levels of educational attainment.[57] Although these "status politics" and "strain" theories[58] accounted for the perception of social displacement believed to be the source of extremist

activism, they concentrated chiefly on the societal position and "irrationalism"[59] of isolated Rightists in relation to mainstream culture and, thus, fell short of explaining either the process by which radical movements were energized, or clarifying why some Right-wing groups became violent and others did not.[60]

At the same time that an ecumenical marginalization theory explaining Right-wing collective behavior was being shaped by political and social studies scholars, new insights into the mobilization of mass movements appeared from the field of social anthropology in Anthony Wallace's theory of group revitalization.[61] Unlike the academics who fashioned the dominant theoretical model, including Richard Hofstadter, Daniel Bell, and Seymour Martin Lipset, Wallace advanced a general theory not specifically designed to explain Rightist activism but, rather, to more generally explain the processual dimensions associated with rapid and transformative group change. Revitalization movements, for Wallace, demonstrated a uniform behavioral response to episodes of destabilizing stress as they congealed into new cultural systems. At its roots the theory had a group-psychological focus. The revitalization concept laid out in sequential steps the route to psychic renewal traversed by social groups perceiving the existing and dominant cultural system in which they functioned as unsatisfactory.[62]

In succinct form, Wallace's theory rested on a set of assumptions concerning the way that stress impacted human society and shaped new social movements in response to it. In his view of an inter-connected human society linked together as a social organization, individuals sought to preserve a minimally fluctuating existence (defined as "homeostasis"). In order to reduce the damaging consequences of stress, Wallace argued that autonomous individual members of society change the mental image, or "mazeway," upon which reliance is placed to provide a perception of order to the surrounding world. Described as "nature, society, culture, personality, and body image as seen by one person," the mazeway operates as a malleable set of perceptions which comprise the total configuration of the individual's worldview.[63] Chronic stress impedes the functional capacity of the mazeway and occurs when the security offered by the individual or group-held gestalt is compromised. At that point a reformulation of mental imagery is required to cope with the dysfunction. When sources of outside stress have rendered unviable the psychological construction of reality in a group of individuals whose mazeways are similarly configured, a revitalization movement may take shape.[64]

The commonality among revitalization movements is that they form as communities of resistance and defiance in relation to forces of change perceived in the existing order. Arising in periods of accelerated societal change, which may include real or imagined threats to its adopted way of life, the revitalization movement attempts to respond to a massive-scale "cultural distortion" in order to realign and strengthen its former spiritual or material condition.[65] In these periods of sweeping change ushered in by rapid developments in the environing

world, revitalization groups coalesce around newly constituted codes of behavior and fortified belief structures so as to facilitate the community's navigation through its sense of malaise and disorientation. But not all such groups fitting this typology respond violently to their experience with the disruptive events which jepordize psychological and community well-being. Depending upon the socio-cultural environment in which they appear, as well as differences between their leadership, overall style, and impressions of impending danger, revitalization movements have also often developed as peaceful separatist collectivities, alternative religions, and other varieties of passive social networks seeking withdrawal from the world.[66]

According to Wallace, the revitalization movement does not immediately emerge in its fully developed form.[67] Progressing through a series of stages, the movement is initiated in a period of increased individual stress. Although Wallace was ambiguous in his description of which segments of the population are likely to be adversely affected by stress, or the degree of it necessary to generate movement formation, his model establishes a useful framework by which to gauge its growth from an individual level to a collective movement.

Whether the stress-producing concerns are manifested in terms of economic disruption, military defeat, natural disaster, or other catastrophic events, the consequences of such heightened discomfort result in the collapse of the mazeway previously adhered to by individuals who recognize the dominant culture's inability to provide for them.[68] The radical re-synthesis of beliefs involved in group revitalization represents a critical step in the movement's envisioned struggle for survival. In response to a perceived cultural distortion brought on by excessive stress, the group faces a stark choice; it either solidifies its countercultural beliefs, or it dies. Cognizant that the larger social system offers little protection or is outright hostile to the group's specific vision, the movement channels its escalating disillusionments with the unviable mazeway in a reorganization effort to energize itself.[69] In the process, the movement generates a new vision of the world which may be completely divorced from the reality observed by the dominant culture. Typically, the revitalization process is facilitated by a prophet-like figure whose inspiration or knowledge motivates the vision of the group and serves as its source of power. As a personality who guides the movement to its adoption of a new mazeway, the visionary embodies its hopes and dreams.[70] Wallace established this framework for psycho-dynamic change in social movements with an influential body of research he produced on the Handsome Lake sect, a Native-American religious group of the early nineteenth century launched by a Seneca prophet foreseeing the cultural rebirth of his people.

Given the dominant moorings of the academic study of extremism and terrorism to the disciplinary fields of political science and sociology, calling attention to Wallace's decades-old anthropological work may appear unusual. Yet,

when applied to the analysis of domestic radical groups espousing nativist characteristics, the relevance of his revitalization theory becomes more evident. The ideological basis of nativism is grounded in the belief that "outsiders" threaten to destroy the traditional way of life, and community, of an established society. Nativists draw their inspiration from an intense hostility directed toward those forces believed to be encroaching upon them and their land, which is held as a symbolic and sacred representation of a people's "space."[71] In his study of a conquered early nineteenth-century eastern woodlands people, Wallace concentrated on the "post-colonization" experience of the Seneca, whose declining status the visionary Handsome Lake succeeded in stemming by initiating a movement aimed at achieving cultural rebirth. Wallace focused on a nativist community of a non-western, pre-modern type in documenting the stresses and strains afflicting the Seneca prior to its re-invigoration under Handsome Lake. However, the revitalization process he described as having taken place in this historic social network has an application to more contemporary varieties of nativist movements. Though such groups may be separated across time and geographical boundaries, and given to adopt different strategies depending upon the particular socio-cultural environment in which they appear, the overall dynamics of revitalization expression remain consistent and can be seen in the formation of some present-day radical social movements.

REVITALIZATION AND THE IDEOLOGICAL FORMATION OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT GROUPS

At this point, I wish to consider the usefulness of Wallace's theory in examining the evolution and life-course of the West Virginia Mountaineer Militia which, by extension, may serve to symbolize a generic sub-class of domestic extremist organization of a nativist type possessing the potential for violence. It is probable that the limited attention given to the revitalization theory by social scientists studying extremist violence and terrorism has been attributable to the anthropological disciplinary orbit in which Wallace's concept was originally enmeshed. As a result, the concept has been almost wholly ignored by academics in the disciplines most often engaged in the study of extremist violence and terrorism.[72] This oversight is unfortunate since the theory provides insights into the totalistic dream of group renewal espoused by counterculturalists, including potentially violent ones, without either pathologizing their actions or narrowly attributing them to politico-economic status anxiety.

I focus on this militia group for two primary reasons, both of which allow us to examine some key assumptions of the theory either made by Wallace or commonly imputed to him by others. These points are highlighted because each holds special relevance for scholars concerned with the psycho-dynamics of violence-prone countercultural groups. The examination of these points is undertaken to show that revitalization theory remains a viable tool for explaining the ori-

gins and maturation of some radical movements, particularly those possessing nativist traits, but that it might be supplemented by further analytical inquiry.

First, while Wallace's object of study was a Native-American religious movement, it is not necessarily the case that religious innovation will be present as the stimulus for group mobilization. In fact, Wallace himself indicated that no group of this type could be wholly non-secular since the sources of stress that energized it derived from the surrounding culture, thus, inevitably linking the movement's collective thoughtworld to the secular environment in which it functioned. Furthermore, he suggested that some "historical political movements" might also have adhered to the same socio-cultural processes and displayed similar psycho-dynamic traits as religion-inspired revitalization movements.[73] In this regard, the ideologically Right-wing West Virginia Mountaineer Militia is offered here as an example of a modern-day, radical protest organization that followed a secular path to revitalization. The fact that this group emerged and sustained itself with a conspiracy-prone and idiosyncratic socio-political belief system should alert us to the possibility that the transformative revitalization cycle described by Wallace can also include groups not directly empowered by religious ideas. That the leadership core of this militia planned to carry out a terrorist act on the basis of heterodox, anti-government beliefs germinated in an insular social system with a secular orientation may, in a broader context, help to focus attention on the power of unconventional, non-religious ideas to motivate adherents in the furtherance of their extremist doctrines.

Since the 1980s, the trend has been for religious factors to be seen as the source underlying most domestic extremist activity, a development which corresponded to the general decline of radical (and secular) Left-wing extremism over two decades ago and the rise of religion-inspired groups on the far Right in the United States.[74] But despite the post-1980s domination of Right-wing extremist groups on the American scene, some violent movements have occasionally appeared whose ideological commitments are not rooted in their impressions of otherworldly transformation or apocalyptic crisis of an eschatological nature. For such radicals, the struggles in which they engage are nonetheless fueled by "earthly" ideas which are similar in terms of their level of metaphysical commitment and psychological duality with intense religious conviction and otherwise bear all its major distinguishing traits. The recent campaigns of "resistance" undertaken both by anti-globalists and radical ecological factions, although less overtly violent than Rightist groups empowered by theological motivations,[75] strongly suggest that relatively newly emerging fringe secularists mobilize with the same sense of desperation, moralism, and devotion to a transcendent cause as do religion-inspired extremists.[76] Viewed from this perspective, the "cosmic war" to which religious extremists are dedicated closely parallels the worldly changing efforts of secularists seeking to impose change on the "heaven" of the terrestrial realm.[77]

The second reason for the attention given to this particular group is that its leaders' decision to use violence helps to illuminate an extremist organization's perception of the environing culture as group-held imagery of looming conflict developed. Wallace's theory did not specifically address the means by which a revitalization movement might come to adopt violent strategies. However, it is clear he recognized that such movements engaged in a form of objective and "real" struggle with the outside culture. For Wallace, the traumatic encounter between a dominant, "colonizing" culture and the resistance community resulted in explosive friction. The conflict pitted an expansionistic power against a traditional society faced with the prospect of losing its established way of life.[78] In the early Native-American societies he studied, Wallace pointed to a wide list of potential "agencies" responsible for the onset of a prolonged period of psychic stress afflicting clusters of individuals believing themselves to be unable to satisfy their needs as a result of a catastrophe of some type. Wallace's understanding of the way that these dramatic events affected the revitalization movement and shaped its efforts at self-renewal are thoroughly documented in his ethnographic account of the Handsome Lake sect in its attempt to achieve a cultural renaissance among the Seneca people after a lengthy period of cultural malaise.[79] It is critical to note, though, that Wallace assumed that the disaster forces impacting the group were clearly visible, objective, and concrete. This was certainly the case with the movement led by the prophet Handsome Lake, whose call for the larger Iroquois nation's self-reformation was made in the face of social and political problems which threatened the society with extinction during its early nineteenth-century reservation experience.[80]

But can the revitalization process be sparked by the intra-group recognition of deprivations that are not of an objective nature? Here we should consider whether group-specific impressions of catastrophic events divorced from the reality observed by the dominant culture offer a fertile breeding ground for the violent revitalization movement. In the case of the Mountaineer Militia, the group's perception of disaster involved images of government persecution of patriots and visions of massive political upheaval in the country. These views, although largely confined to a narrow orbit of militias and an assortment of other far Right factions, nonetheless defined the group's thoughtworld and led its key members to prepare for a violent anti-government insurrection.

Clearly, in this particular case, perceptions rather than objective reality created the unique psychic deprivations that energized the movement. The implications that follow for students of radical protest movements are two-fold. First, it is entirely possible (although not often considered) that violence will emerge as a desirable strategy for change even when the sources of stress affecting the group are not visible, or even imaginable, to those outside its ranks; and second, it can be expected that the group's adopted ideological framework will influence the specific images of deprivation it perceives.[81] Groups of a similar ideological style, such as reactionary Right-wing movements, will perceive their well-being

as being jeopardized in similar ways, and perhaps even by the same agents or oppositional forces. Likewise, extremist Left-wing groups on the opposite end of the ideological spectrum are linked to belief structures that serve to provide their own ready-made injustices and enemies.[82]

REVITALIZATION ACTIVITY IN OTHER RECENT DOMESTIC CASES

The entire West Virginia Mountaineer Militia case represented only a two-year "blip" on a broader screen of militia activism in the 1990s. Other militia movements, such as the much better-known Militia of Montana and the Michigan Militia, came to public attention at the same time and shared common outlooks. Wallace's theory of revitalization possesses much utility when explaining the growth of these, and other, fundamentally nativist groups which mobilized as a result of perceived threats to the ways of life, values, and beliefs of their followings. Formed as protest movements seeking to achieve psychic renewal in the face of perceived catastrophes, the militias organized in reaction to government acts which, within the interpretive psycho-dynamic constructs of this subculture, were seen as imminent dangers.[83] As exemplars of the period's larger militia movement, both the Militia of Montana and the Michigan Militia displayed the tendencies of revitalization activism. Each coalesced in response to a shared recognition of disasters that had recently unfolded. Further, both groups retained throughout their existence a new vision of the social and political realm and, without engaging in violence, sought to implement it through a concentrated strategy of protest against the "colonizing" actions of the state. And, importantly, each drew strength and self-confirmation from the posture of defiance taken against the dominant, environing order.

The same sense of besiegement and crisis-born angst experienced by the militias in the 1990s was also evident in a number of other extremist groups of the 1970s and 1980s. Here, too, Wallace's revitalization framework is useful to the extent that it brings focus to both the processual aspects of adaptive change in the group's outlook, as well as to the reasoning behind the adoption of the approach to resist encroachment (and defeat) by the surrounding culture. Members of The Order, for example, represented the most militant nucleus of the Aryan movement in the early-1980s and, while emanating from a like-minded association of true-believers seeking to ultimately establish a racially separate homeland in the Pacific Northwest, turned away from a more patient strategy of attaining geographical separation to one of guerrilla warfare.[84] Led by the charismatic Robert Jay Mathews, who had grown weary of the Aryan movement's passivity, the approximately 30-member group pursued its short-lived holy war against those elements of society believed to be corrupted by "Zionist influences." Committed to the belief that its enemies were succeeding in making plans to eliminate Aryan culture, The Order engaged in a campaign of violence in the hope that its actions would accelerate racial crisis in America. By provok-

ing revolution, its members imagined they were setting the stage for the arrival of the new Aryan golden age.[85]

In the same manner that The Order's formation is illuminated by viewing it in the context of revitalization activity, the traits Wallace describes can also be observed in another well-known terrorist organization: the Weathermen. Although as equally millenarian as The Order, the Weathermen, as an extremist secular group, was not infused with radical apocalyptic religious belief and, thus, did not either identify its objectives nor frame its strategy in terms of a holy war. The Weathermen did, nonetheless, come into being as a result of doctrinal disagreements with a larger radical movement, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), (with which it shared many basic beliefs) and adopted violence in response to the perceived inactivity and "moderation" of its parent body. Having rejected as ineffectual the passive political activity and demonstrations of SDS, the more extreme Weathermen faction disengaged from the organization following a declared "war council" held in Flint, Michigan in December 1969, and thereafter pursued a strategy of armed struggle.[86]

The vision for a perfect future society for the Weathermen actually differed little from that of other Marxist-inspired New Left groups of the era. But what distinguished it was the degree to which the Weathermen's radical egalitarianism, manichaean outlook, and romantic ideas about Third World revolutionary struggles inspired its members to take up an active terrorist campaign against the state lasting about seven years (1969-76). Radicalized both by its adherence to uncompromising anti-capitalist beliefs and also by a number of crises (including urban riots, the Vietnam War, and campus unrest),[87] the Weathermen set out to destroy its image of a hostile, oppressive state and, in the process, act as the vanguard for an expected revolution. The idea that the country had been conquered by a conspiracy of the rich that controlled government and manipulated the people was a philosophical cornerstone in the group's belief structure and was used to justify its acts of violence.[88]

Naturally, none of these cases precisely mirrors the historical example of the Seneca, which was the focus for Wallace's model of revitalization activity. Each case is obviously unique inasmuch as these more recent groups observed varying versions of impending disaster, recognized different threats, and molded their realities on the basis of distinctive ultimate concerns. However, there are sufficient points of common ground among these and similar types of resistance movements in terms of their visionary yearnings for renewal, convictions about disaster, and adherence to the stage-process of radicalization to claim that revitalization activity appears not to be bound to any narrow historical epoch, nor only to the domestic environment. Despite the domestic context emphasized here, revitalization movements are not by necessity a purely American phenomenon genetically linked to the country's socio-political trends and historical experience. In point of fact, Wallace did not consider the existence of these utopi-

an communities of dissent to be geographically limited in their pursuit of a new cultural system. Rather, he saw revitalization movements as having their genesis in episodes of social and cultural stress and suggested they could appear in any environment marked by human activity.[89] Whatever region may be involved, stress-laden circumstances give way to the movement's embrace of a code of "dogma, myth, and ritual" which defines its identity and guides action in relation to the outside world.[90] In this sense, Wallace's theory has validity in helping to assess the behavior and resort to violence of international terrorist and extremist groups, although no research attempt has yet been made in its demonstration.

PREDICTION AND THE EXTREMIST MIND SET

It should not be lost on academics and policy makers concerned with group violence that the important task is to discern in advance the types of deprivations or threats which can give life to anti-statist movements.[91] One supporting point will suffice. Federal authorities were certainly unaware that their tragic mishandling of operations at Ruby Ridge and Waco would be interpreted by some elements within the larger anti-government movement as a demonstration of the state's efforts to destroy its opponents.[92] In these incidents, the culture clash between the state and an atavistic community of radical anti-statists occurred when the latter envisioned its way of life being imperiled. Better prediction of the deprivations that extremists organize around is, of course, dependent upon careful analysis of the unconventional ideas that circulate among them, as well as considering the interpretive logic that shapes reactive behavior within the extremist subculture. In these high-profile cases which served to mobilize militias and other patriot groups in the 1990s, activists in a nascent anti-government movement saw in the government's actions the confirmation of their worst fears and found in the events the means to validate and solidify their beliefs.

Although militia-style movements appear to have entered into a period of decline and no longer make headlines, other types of domestic extremist groups have seemingly moved into a period of efflorescence. Much less bound by the traditional ideological structures that readily identified either Rightist or Left-wing groups of the past, these eclectic "single issue" actors fixate on isolated causes that are not necessarily tied to better-known and more systemic ideologies of dissent. Most prominent among them are those which are motivated by radical ecological and anti-globalist causes. These largely underground factions harbor the same sense of cosmological dislocation from a putatively idealized state of existence brought about by threatening alien interventions in the social world as had more traditional Rightist groups through the 1990s. Although not formally nativist in the conventional sense used by historians and social scientists to describe atavistic and reactionary social movements, the general underpinnings of their world views connote similar fears about the destruction of "authentic" communities at the hands of outsiders. Separated from a larger society believed

to be unenlightened about the paramount issues affecting it, and viewing the degradation of the environment and destructive powers of un-checked, colonizing capitalism in the surrounding world, ecological resistance and anti-globalist groups represent the newest, post-modern networks of extremism in America. Whether such groups move in earnest to the phase of active anti- government terrorism (as opposed to their current strategies of demonstration and property damage) hinges upon the internal logic to which they adhere.[93]

As the government begins to pursue the next phase of its post-11 September counter-terrorism strategy, it is conceivable that some domestic extremists could again perceive themselves as being under siege by the state. Indeed, if the scale of the cultural distortion perceived by such groups influences their adoption of violent tactics, then the post-11 September domestic security environment may be marked by new occurrences of anti-government violence. The triggers for such a scenario would ultimately be idiosyncratically intuited and shaped by the threat perceptions of the group. However, in an atmosphere marked by heightened internal surveillance measures, increased governmental powers of investigation, and new limits on civil liberties, the possibility for extremist reaction exists, particularly if these policies are to remain permanently in place. Under these circumstances, those seeing themselves as the last defenders of an endangered community would become, in terms of their collective mind set, further detached from both general society and the state.[94]

The nativist activism demonstrated by the militias of the 1990s reveals that small and occasionally violent groups can emerge and organize under conditions that appear normal within the cognitive parameters of general society. As meaningless as they may have been to the mainstream public, visions of internment camps and one-world government rule nonetheless represented a threatening reality to those imagining their freedoms and land being taken away by political elites working toward the realization of the New World Order.[95] Scholars of extremist and terrorist movements have often taken the view, consistent with the subtle elitism of the marginalizaton thesis, that such heterodox beliefs are distilled from the socio-pathological style inherent among groups experiencing protracted frustration and a declining status position in society.[96] Seen as a form of "therapy" in the classical school's approach, Right-wing extremism was framed as a backlash response to macro-level structural changes of an economic or political nature in society that left "resistors" prone to confusion and anger. Thus, forming reactionary movements was seen as little more than a desperate attempt at managing the psychological unrest that was said to afflict disaffected "riff-raff" in changing times.[97] What has been so frequently dismissed, however, in classical social scientific analyses of radical groups is the role that ideology plays in their generation. Reliance upon the conventional theories,[98] in the absence of more in-depth inquiry concerning radical ideology, leaves us with a superficial view of the processes through which extremists become galvanized in a movement, as well as a tendency to overemphasize the usual "structural stimuli" con-

ventionally assumed to be the source of extremist activism.[99] While outside catalysts may certainly weigh on the movement and propel it on a course of conflict with society, these broad social and political forces have been defined in a uniform manner by the conventional theories which tend to attribute to extremists a "one size fits all" set of grievances. These include regaining economic power, finding a political voice, and overturning societal institutions believed by dissidents to be counterproductive to their goals.[100] Although these concerns still may possess considerable currency for some radical movements, they suggest a time-bound consistency among the objectives of extremists and do not encompass the entire range of potential grievances they have absorbed or will identify with in the future. This is particularly true among more recent examples of extremist groups whose uncharted millenarian attitudes and idiosyncratic styles have few precedents and do not perfectly mesh with the type-cast characteristics used in the past to measure either Right or Left-wing traits.[101]

What is needed is further attention to the embedded beliefs which pervade and guide the actions of extremist movements. Although popularly discounted as epiphenomenal by the various marginalization theories, that focus exclusively on macro-level structural change, these countercultural world views can germinate and exist independently of the tectonic social and political shifts in society said to be responsible for alienation, status anxiety, and, ultimately, the growth of resistance movements.[102] By concentrating only on massive-scale change (an objective condition) as the engine for extremism, academics have established a standard view that unintentionally "packages" extremists in ways that highlight their similarities with other elements of society who are likewise displaced by economic downturns, political transitions, and social reforms. This approach presents a two-fold problem. Emphasizing macro-level catalytic events obscures the point that extremists have belief systems which are different not only in degree, but in kind, from the otherwise "dispossessed" in society. Furthermore, this line of thought also suggests, by extension, that the absence of destabilizing structural change will mute extremism by eliminating what are seen to be its uniform grievances: an assessment clouding the point that extremists (by virtue of their ideologies) see the world differently and may not respond in a predictable manner to objective realities that impact general society.

In order to better ascertain the tendencies of extremists, and to begin an effort at predicting their use of strategies involving violence, scholars and authorities concerned with these issues would do well to consider the logic that derives from the extremist world view. Assessments of the likelihood for identifiable lineages of extremist philosophy to erupt into violence would be a useful starting point. Here, consideration could be applied to the "families" of belief which are believed to possess the greatest potential for violent activism. Styles of nativism, for example, which have proven to elicit reactionary responses on the part of resistance communities represent ideological currents that bear watching. So, too, do certain traditions of thought emanating from radical ecological and social

justice factions. By examining the features of these philosophically countercultural landscapes, a more accurate picture might be developed of the most incandescent types of deprivations likely to emerge from extremist world views.[103] Such efforts, if handled in cautionary ways that distinguish between obvious, acceptable protest beliefs and more volatile outlooks, would give us valuable insights into the discontentment that permeates extremist camps, as well as offering a means for pre-emption by examining belief structures with an eye trained toward the appearance of group visions of impending catastrophe or conflict. Of course, in cases where no established ideological lineage exists, the task is made more difficult and efforts at discerning the potential for a transition to violence require careful attention to the eclectic strands of thought that comprise the group's outlook.

The academic study of extremism and terrorism deals with complex problems having wide-ranging origins. In this sense, the field, which has been dominated by a relatively small set of ideas about group mobilization, would benefit from an enlargement of its intellectual knowledge base. Looking outside the disciplines traditionally informing terrorist studies and building on promising theories through further inquiry are ways to arrive at new understandings. If appropriately reconsidered, Wallace's theory of revitalization, despite its occasional ambiguities and ambitious breadth, can assist in drawing attention both to why radical protest movements come into being and to the transformative process of change in groups as their guiding beliefs shape them into countercultural systems of dissent. In particular, the theory's emphasis upon ideology as the motivating force for movement growth should cause us to reflect on the role that inherently subjective, utopian visions of renewal assume in the nurturance of extremism.

Endnotes

The author would like to acknowledge the helpful insights he received from two people. I thank Rodger Henderson for his views about spirituality and protest among early Native-American movements, and Michael Barkun for our many discussions over the years on millenarian movements and disaster belief. While I benefitted from their observations, any errors are entirely my own.

1. See, for example, David Bennet, *The Party of Fear* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), pp. 244-49; Catherine McNicol-Stock, *Rural Radicals* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 3-10; Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 110-13. Groups of this nature have emerged episodically in the US in the twentieth century. The first of the paramilitary groups of this political style was The Silver Legion, a Fascist, pro-Hitler movement of the 1930s led by William Dudley Pelley. At its height, the group counted 15,000 members among its ranks. Later examples include the "Christian Front" units organized in the 1930s by Charles Coughlin; militant factions of the Ku Klux Klan in the Civil Rights era; various 1960s and 1970s proto-survivalist and stridently anti-communist groups, including the Minutemen, the California Rangers, and the Christian Patriots Defense League. By the 1970s and 1980s, the nationwide farm crisis and the virulently anti-Semitic Christian Identity faith factored into the growth of The Posse Comitatus, a militant Right-wing movement that was confined mainly, but not exclusively, to the Plains states and the Pacific West.
2. Mark Pitcavage, "Camouflage and Conspiracy: The Militia Movement from Ruby Ridge to Y2K," *American Behavioral Scientist* 44, no. 6 (February 2001), p. 961.
3. John George and Laird Wilcox, *American Extremists: Militias, Supremacists, Klansmen, Communists, and Others* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books), pp. 255-56. As George and Wilcox note, however, it is likely that some inflation of these figures has occurred.
4. Ibid., p. 263.
5. Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 109. The key trials involved members of the Arizona-based Viper Militia, who were charged with illegal possession of weapons and conspiracy to promote civil disorder, and members of the Militia-at-Large for the Republic of Georgia, who were convicted of conspiring to "wage war" on the US government.
6. *The Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Report* (Spring 2003), p. 48.
7. "Militias Willing to Assist in Civil Defense," an open letter to President George W. Bush signed by leaders of numerous American militia groups, 9 November 2001. This document can be accessed on the internet on the patriot website www.patriotalliance.org. The statement calls for militias to assist the government in the war against terrorism. It should be noted that most militias have not embraced the view espoused by neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic organizations which consider the terrorist attacks on America a consequence of the country's support for Israel. See Christopher Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism in America: From the Klan to Al Qaeda* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 126.
8. See, for example, Morris Dees, *Gathering Storm: America's Militia Threat* (New York: Harper Collins,1996), pp. 4-6; Robert Snow, *The Militia Threat: Terrorists Among US* (New York: Plenum Trade, 1999), p. ix; and Joel Dyer, *Harvest of Rage: Why Oklahoma City Is Only the Beginning* (New York: Westview, 1997), pp. 6-7.
9. Joshua Freilich, Jeremy Pienik, and Gregory Howard, "Toward Comparative Studies of the U.S. Militia Movement," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 42, no. 1-2, (Spring 2001), p. 164.
10. Despite the disturbingly unconventional or "irrational" substance of the ideology, errors of judgment might otherwise be made by researchers. Failing to discern the autonomous, group-specific logic inherent in extremist belief systems leads to the problem of over-generalization about extremist groups and obstructs detailed analysis of their often individualized motivations, characteristics, and beliefs. See Walter Reich, "Understanding Terrorist Behavior: The Limits

and Opportunities of Psychological Inquiry," in Walter Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 267; Martha Crenshaw, "The Psychology of Terrorism," *Political Psychology* 21, no. 2 (June 2000), p. 410.

11. Personal interview conducted with anonymous former member of the West Virginia Mountaineer Militia, Clarksburg, West Virginia, 7 March 1999. This interviewee was assigned a leadership position in the organization and worked closely with Looker throughout the time when the militia was organizing.

12. Although several other Right-wing, domestic groups also might be listed here, these represent the most prominent of the organized, militia organizations that engaged in, or planned, acts of anti-government violence during the decade. For an examination of the Minnesota Patriots Council and its leaders' plans in 1994 to use ricin, a deadly protein toxin derived from castor beans, to assassinate law enforcement agents, see Jonathan Tucker and Jason Pate "The Minnesota Patriots Council," in Jonathan Tucker, ed., *Toxic Terror: Assessing Terrorist Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 161-63. It is worth noting that four members of the group were convicted and incarcerated under the provisions of the 1989 Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act. See also, "Bombs, Bullets, Bodies: The Decade in Review," The Southern Poverty Law Center's *Intelligence Report* issue 97 (Winter 2000), pp. 22-23.

13. Elsewhere, I have commented on the process of extremist group ideological mutation and the idiosyncratic or conspiracy beliefs that promote change in these movements. See Brad Whitsel, "Ideological Mutation and Millennial Belief in the American Neo-Nazi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 89-106.

14. Anthony F.C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* 58, (1956), p. 267.

15. Mark Pitcavage, "The Mountaineer Militia's Long Slippery Slope," *The Militia Watchdog* (October 1996), p. 1.

16. Freilich, et al, "Toward Comparative Studies," p. 169.

17. Martin Durham, "Militias, the Patriot Movement, and the Oklahoma City Bombing." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 8, no. 1 (1996), p. 70.

18. Personal interview, as note 11.

19. Personal interview, as note 11.

20. United States District Court Northern District of West Virginia vs. Floyd Raymond Looker, Criminal Action NO. 1:96CR41-01. Trial transcript, p. 416.

21. Personal interview, as note 11.

22. Looker, trial transcript, pp. 414-20.

23. Personal interview, as note 11.

24. Personal interview, as note 11.

25. Frank P. Mintz, *The Liberty Lobby and the American Right* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985), p. 5. Although Spotlight reflected a vaguely racist and anti-Semitic tone while catering to its considerable readership on the far Right (estimated at 200,000 in the 1980s), there is no evidence whatsoever that these attitudes were accepted either by Looker or the militia at large. Rather, it is likely that group members found attractive the tabloid's luxuriant and exotic conspiracism, all of which was aimed at ideological foes on the Left.

26. Conspiracy theories along these lines existed, of course, long before the onset of the Cold War and, in their earlier formulations, reflected anti-alien and nativist sentiments. For an understanding of the historical roots of these beliefs in the US, see Bennet, *Party of Fear*, pp. 1-14.

27. Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press), p. 66.

28. Daniel Pipes, *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), p. 7.
29. Personal interview, as note 11. The interviewee indicated that militia leaders had discovered this hidden history of the US banking system through their group research efforts. One of the works said to be very influential in shaping the group's view of the Jekyll Island conspiracy and its implications for the US economy was Des Griffin, *Descent Into Slavery?* (Clackamus, OR: Emissary Publications, 1980). In this volume, Griffin (who has been popular with anti-government readers on the extreme Right) lays out the history of the international banker-controlled Federal Reserve and the loss of American sovereignty to the globalist forces of the New World Order.
30. A. Ralph Epperson, *The Unseen Hand: An Introduction to the Conspiratorial View of History* (Tucson, AZ: Publius Press, 1985), p. 171.
31. Paul T. Coughlin, *Secrets, Plots and Hidden Agendas* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), p. 37.
32. Personal interview, as note 11.
33. My efforts failed at obtaining a copy of the video *America Under Siege*. However, it was discussed in various news stories near the time of the 1996 arrest of militia leaders. See "Undercover Video Shows Militia Recruitment Methods," *CNN Interactive*, 13 October 1996. This story can be accessed on the world wide web at: http://www.cgi.cnn.com/US/9610/13 militiamen/
34. For an example of the widespread patriot black helicopter literature, see Jim Keith, *Black Helicopters II: The Endgame Strategy* (Lilburn, GA: IllumiNet Press, 1997), p. 83. Keith argued in this and other overtly pro-patriot/militia publications that the presence of the black helicopters in the US represented the near-term arrival of an American police state. This was, in fact, to serve as a transitional period of martial law before the ultimate consolidation of the New World Order.
35. David Neiwert, *In God's Country: The Patriot Movement and the Pacific Northwest* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1999), p. 2; Mack Mariani, "The Michigan Militia: Political Engagement or Political Alienation," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10, no. 4 (1998), p. 122.
36. Pitcavage, "The Mountaineer Militia's Long Slippery Slope," p. 3.
37. Personal interview, as note 11.
38. Martin Durham, "Preparing for Armageddon: Citizen Militias, the Patriot Movement, and the Oklahoma City Bombing," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 8, no. 1 (1996), p. 76.
39. Personal interview, as note 11.
40. Looker, trial transcript, pp. 426-27.
41. British sociologist Colin Campbell has used the term "cultic milieu" to describe the "cultural underground" of individuals and groups in society adhering to heterodox ideas considered unacceptable by mainstream culture. The deviant beliefs that percolate (and are transmitted) within this subculture are in opposition to the conventional knowledge "dispensed" by society's dominant institutions and may include, for example, conspiratorial versions of history, notions of occult "truth," and pseudoscientific theories. Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu, and Secularization," *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 278.
42. Pitcavage, "The Mountaineer Militia's Long Slippery Slope," p. 4.
43. Personal interview, as note 11.
44. In this respect, Looker's inner circle of associates viewed "Rex 84" in the same light as many other patriot groups during the mid-1990s. The foundations of this patriot conspiracy theory can be located in Jim Keith, *Black Helicopters Over America: Strikeforce of the New World Order*

(Lilburn, GA: Illuminet, 1994), pp. 80-96. Keith, an independent journalist, has been a popular writer in patriot circles.

45. United States District Court Northern District of West Virginia vs. Terrell P. Coon, Criminal Action NO. 1:96CR42-02, Trial transcript, pp. 46-47.

46. Looker's strategy for opposing what he saw as the imminent crackdown on the militia and the eventual occupation of the state by a UN-led army can be found in his trial transcript. Looker, trial transcript, pp. 425-51.

47. "Mountaineer Militia Men Indicted in Bomb Plot," *The Times West Virginian*, 8 November 1996, p. 2.

48. Looker may have adopted the name "Sons of Liberty" from the pre-Revolutionary War secret organization by the same name. This radical group organized to combat the British Stamp Act and to promote opposition to the Crown. See Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 85.

49. "FBI: Militia Targeted Greenspan and Rockefeller," *The Seattle Times,* 13 June 1997, p. 1.

50. Coon, trial transcript, vol. 4, p. 98.

51. Personal interview, as note 11. The interviewee indicated to the author that he was neither among the small number of ranking militia officers involved in targeting the FBI facility, nor had he any foreknowledge of the bombing plot. The interviewee felt that Looker did not widely discuss with other militia members his plan to bomb the FBI complex because the militia at-large would not have supported it.

52. Looker, trial transcript, p. 435.

53. "Agents Bust Militiamen in Bomb Plot," AP wire, 14 October 1996.

54. Pitcavage, "The Mountaineer Militia's Long Slippery Slope," p. 5.

55. It is worth noting the irony that Looker's inner circle of Mountaineers, an extremist patriot group, would conspire with what was assumed to be a Middle Eastern terrorist organization for the purposes of destroying the FBI complex. While the Middle Eastern group was, of course, fictitious, Looker's actions here indicate that the participating Mountaineers intended to carry out the transaction and, in this sense, thought that they were cooperating with the Middle Eastern terrorists to facilitate the destruction of the target. Looker's attempts at cultivating a connection with Islamic terrorists has no precedent among American Right-wing extremist groups. However, in an interesting parallel to the Mountaineer case, members of the 1980s Chicago-based, Black, Islamic criminal gang, The El Rukns, bargained with representatives of Moammar Kaddafi to carry out acts of anti-American terrorism for Libya in return for $2.5 million. For insights into the El Rukn case, see Brent Smith, *Terrorism in America: Pipe Bombs and Pipe Dreams* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 121-24.

56. "Militiaman Convicted Under Anti-Terrorism Law," *USA Today*, 26 August 1997.

57. James Aho, *The Politics of Righteousness: Idaho Christian Patriotism* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1990), pp. 136-37.

58. Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 210-11. The central tenet to both, which are largely differentiated only by the political science and sociology disciplinary backgrounds of the period's social movement researchers, was that Rightist groups mobilized in response to threats driven by status insecurity.

59. Nella Van Dyke and Sarah A. Soule, "Structural Social Change and the Mobilizing Effect of Threat: Explaining Levels of Patriot and Militia Organizing in the United States," *Social Problems* 49, no. 4 (2002), p. 498. This presumption of irrationality, which was a consistent theme in the early post-World War II research on Right-wing movements, was based on the studies done on Nazism, fascism, and McCarthyism from the latter 1940s until the early 1960s.

60. By the 1970s, however, two other major social movement theories appeared which had implications for the study of Right-wing resistance movements. Both relative deprivation theory and

resource-mobilization theory offered explanations for the rise of oppositional groups, but neither was originally applied in this direction. In general, the political and social science literature has often ignored Right-wing movements. See Nelson Pichardo, "New Social Movements: A Critical Review," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997), pp. 411-30.

61. Paul de Armond, "A Time for New Beginnings (or This Singular Epidemic Among the Sheep)," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 22, no. 2 (April-June 1999), p. 163.
62. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," p. 265.
63. Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 31.
64. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," p. 266.
65. Michael Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements Against European Colonial Order* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), pp. 183-84.
66. Ibid., pp. 183-84. It merits attention that there is considerable variety among the preferred strategies adopted by revitalization movements and that such movements are neither geographically centralized, nor are they a recent historical phenomenon. See Jean Rosenfeld, *The Island Broken in Two Halves: Land and Renewal Movements Among the Maori of New Zealand* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), pp. 9-10.
67. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," p. 264.
68. Ibid., p. 269.
69. Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium*, pp. 38-39.
70. Anthony F.C. Wallace, "The Dekinawideh Myth Analyzed as the Record of a Revitalization Movement," *Ethnohistory* 5 (1958), p. 120.
71. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1981), p. 4.
72. These include political science, history, sociology, and social psychology. To date, only a few social scientists have discussed the concept of revitalization in terms of its domestic extremist or terrorist potential. See Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium;* and *Martha F. Lee, Earth First!* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995).
73. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," p. 277. Wallace provides examples of certain factions during the French Revolution, as well as the case of the early Russian communist revolutionaries, as secular movements whose ideologies were virtually indistinguishable from supernatural religious belief in terms of quality of doctrine, commitment of followers, and emphasis on "moral" purity.
74. James Coates, *Armed and Dangerous: The Rise of the Survivalist Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), pp. 18-19.
75. Matthew Morgan, "The Origins of the New Terrorism," *Parameters* 4, no. 1 (2004), pp. 34- 35. Note that the theological belief structure observed by Right-wing extremists has generally been rooted in some permutation of Christian Identity, a doctrine which garnered some following among the militia movement in the 1990s, but which tended not to play a dominant role in militia formation.
76. For a sense of the quasi-spiritual dimensions of the beliefs in this sometimes overlapping network of contemporary ecological, anti-globalist, and animal rights groups, see Bron Taylor, "Diggers, Wolves, Ents, Elves, and Expanding Universes: Bricolage, Religion, and Violence from Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front to the Antiglobalization Resistance" in Jeffrey Kapan and Helene Loow, eds., *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization* (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 2002), pp. 26-74.
77. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p. 10. Juergensmeyer has used the term "cosmic war" to describe the theologically driven efforts of religious terrorists to engage in violence in order to bring about worldly change.

78. Lee, *Earth First!*, p. 21.
79. Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), p. 303.
80. Ibid., pp. 321-29.
81. David Aberle, "A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory As Applied to Millenarian and Other Cult Movements," in Sylvia L. Thrupp, ed., *Millennial Dreams in Action: Studies in Revolutionary Religious Movements* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), p. 212.
82. For a discussion of how ideological styles affect the enemy-construction process of extremists and, in particular, for its relevance during the Ruby Ridge episode, see James Aho, *This Thing of Darkness: A Sociology of the Enemy* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1995), pp. 50-67.
83. Neiwert, *In God's Country*, p. 25.
84. Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 193-95.
85. Ibid., p. 197. As Gardell notes, "The Order was comprised of both Christian Identity adherents and neo-pagans. Despite the membership division, both elements within the group recognized the other-worldly religious quality of the holy war in which they were engaged."
86. Walter Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001), p. 208.
87. Richard J. Ellis, *The Dark Side of the Left: Illiberal Egalitarianism in America* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998), p. 120.
88. Ibid., p. 146.
89. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," p. 269. Wallace indicates that revitalization activity can take form in populations which he described as either "primitive" or "civilized." He cites examples of geographically diverse movements which fit both types.
90. Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Religion: An Anthropological View* (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 30.
91. Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium*, p. 35. Here it important to note, as Barkun remarks in his discussion of relative deprivation, that the strains perceived by the group experiencing deprivation may not be recognized (or validated) by the outside society.
92. Lou Michael and Dan Herbeck, *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City Bombing* (New York: Regan Books, 2001), p. 379.
93. Gary Ackerman, "Beyond Arson: A Threat Assessment of the Earth Liberation Front," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, no. 4 (2003), p. 144. While opinion by experts is divided on whether such groups will turn to lethal violence, the FBI has indicated that the radical ecological group, Earth Liberation Front, currently represents a significant terrorist threat.
94. Jon B. Gould, "Playing with Fire: The Civil Liberties Implications of September 11th," *Public Administration Review* 62 (September 2002), p. 74.
95. Michael Barkun, "Reflections after Waco: Millennialists and the State" in James Lewis, ed., *From the Ashes: Making Sense of Waco* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), pp. 41-42. In his analysis of the Branch Davidians' beliefs, Barkun points to the mistakes made by the government in the failed negotiations with David Koresh and suggests, more broadly, the possibility that outsiders' dismissal of a separatist group's worldview may lead its members to cling to, and defend, their beliefs even more tenaciously.
96. Lipset and Raab, *The Politics of Unreason*, p. 504.
97. Freilich, et al, "Toward Comparative Studies," p. 174.
98. Later-coming collective behavior theories, including relative deprivation and resource mobilization (both of which became popular by the 1970s), are included here. Undergirding relative

deprivation theory was the same tendency to view protest movements in a socio-pathological context. Their growth was framed as a reactionary response to changes in society that further marginalized angry resisting elements. While Charles Tilly's resource mobilization theory rejected the view that "insurgent" movements were simply (and blindly) responding to status frustration, and instead argued that they "rationally" organized to obtain support and promote favorable change, the general theory remained dismissive of group ideology as a motivating force. See Hugh Davis Graham "Violence, Social Theory, and the Historians: The Debate over Consensus and Culture in America" in Ted Robert Gurr, ed., *Violence in America: Protest, Rebellion, Reform* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), pp. 336- 38.

99. Freilich, et. al, "Towards Comparative Studies," p. 174.

100. Betty A. Dobratz and Stephanie Shanks-Meile, *The White Separatist Movement in the United States* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1007), p. 285.

101. Jonathan B. Tucker, "Lessons from the Case Studies," in Jonathan B. Tucker, ed., *Toxic Terror: Assessing Terrorist Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 261-62.

102. Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Sources of the Radical Right," in Daniel Bell, ed., *The Radical Right* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002), p. 309.

103. Robert S. Robins and Jerrold M. Post, *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 212-13. In this sense, of course, attention must be focused on the extremist construction of reality. Also see Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 95. While Sageman's research is focused on the global *Salafi jihad*, an Islamic revivalist movement, there are some broad similarities between the styles and types of perceived deprivation experienced by *Salafi jihadists* and those felt by domestic extremists in terms of general anxiety, perceptions of "enclosure" by a hostile world, and feelings of spiritual emptiness in the pre-movement formation stage of development. The commonalities, though, appear at a general level of examination and caution should be exercised in forcing more specific connections concerning world-view features. However, and more directly, Sageman's explanation of the social bond and network processes involved in joining the *jihad* would appear to provide scholars with a useful means by which to also ascertain the socialization mechanisms of American anti-government groups.