

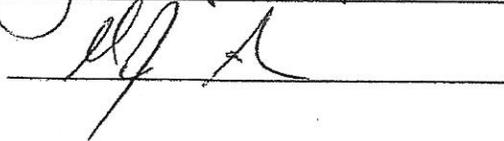
NATIONALIST IDEOLOGY AND THE U.S. PATRIOT MILITIA MOVEMENT

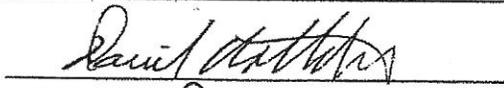
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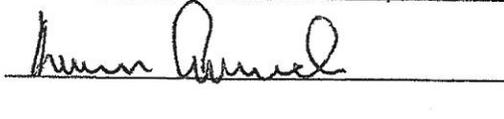
John Daniel Bales  
A Thesis  
Submitted to the  
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The Requirements for the Degree  
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Master of Arts  
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Committee:

  
\_\_\_\_\_ Chair of Committee

  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_ Graduate Program Director

  
\_\_\_\_\_ Dean, School for Conflict  
Analysis and Resolution

Date: 12/5/13 \_\_\_\_\_ Fall Semester 2013  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA  
University of Malta  
Valletta, Malta



Nationalist Ideology and The U.S. Patriot Militia Movement

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at George Mason University, and the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Malta

by

John Daniel Bales  
Bachelor of Science  
George Mason University, 2011

Director: Richard Rubenstein, Professor  
School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

Fall Semester 2013  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA  
University of Malta  
Valletta, Malta

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## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to my loving wife Sarah, and my two incredible children Jonathan and Angelina.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the many friends, relatives, colleagues, and supporters who have made this project possible. My dear wife Sarah and my children, Jonathan and Angelina, continue to be my greatest inspiration. My close friends Nicholas Van Woert and Danny Sheehy were of constant assistance, and were always available to discuss theoretical underpinnings of this project. Dr. Rich Rubenstein, Michael English, and other faculty members at George Mason University and University of Malta were of invaluable help. Many thanks to the Lutheran Seminary Library in Gettysburg, PA, the Old University Library in Valletta, Malta, and the Lord Fairfax Community College Library in Warrenton, VA, for providing well-equipped surroundings in which to work. Additionally, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my father, Dr. William Bales, for his comments, edits, patience, and assistance with earlier drafts. Finally, I thank my mother and father for the use of their lakeside cabin, “Pilgrims Rest”, in Michaux State Forest, PA. The tranquil setting was truly inspirational and I will fondly remember the time spent there finishing this thesis.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

United States .....	U.S.
Southern Poverty Law Center .....	SPLC
Anti-Defamation League .....	ADL
Ku Klux Klan .....	KKK
John Birch Society .....	JBS
Posse Comitatus .....	PC
New World Order .....	NWO
Zionist Occupation Government .....	ZOG
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives .....	ATF
Federal Bureau of Investigation .....	FBI

## **ABSTRACT**

### **NATIONALIST IDEOLOGY AND THE U.S. PATRIOT MILITIA MOVEMENT**

John Daniel Bales, M.S., M.A.

George Mason University, 2013; University of Malta, 2013

Thesis Director: Dr. Richard Rubenstein

This thesis describes ideological commonalities of U.S. Patriot Militias and extreme Nationalism. A perceptible increase of American militia organizations in recent years prompted an intensive research project that explores historical movements of far-right extremism in the U.S., correlative features of Nationalism, and current Patriot Militia groups. During this process, systematic literature research was conducted to determine the extent to which extreme nationalist ideology contributes to Patriot Militia discourse and organization. The subsequent findings revealed shared elements of nationalist thought in past and present far-right movements, demonstrated by critical theory and comparative analysis. This thesis supplements the available scholarship of far-right organizations in the U.S. and theoretical frameworks of Nationalism.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Introduction**

The nature of the George Mason University and University of Malta Dual Degree Programme allows for a wide range of social conflict research. George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR) provides a multi-disciplinary degree encompassing elements of foreign policy, political science, terrorism studies, psychology, sociology, statistical analysis, research methodology, community relations, security, economics, and diplomacy. Degree methodology integrated advanced analysis of social conflict, cycles of violence, and transformative peace building processes on domestic and international levels. In tandem, the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC) at the University of Malta incorporated a methodical study of conflict phenomena, including analyses of international relations and security scenarios in the Mediterranean region. Coursework included the application of theoretical frameworks and diplomatic techniques to practical case studies focused on the Euro-Med area, including North Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.

As such, the narrowing of potential research topics required considerable effort. The scale and scope of this project required a focused approach in which research and writing could be accomplished over an approximate three-month time period, following coursework completion. Pilot research was conducted over eight months of study while coursework was in session, but the vast majority of this thesis was completed post-

coursework. Undergraduate study had included some research of fringe groups in the U.S., particularly movements that had contributed to violent, social conflict. My familiarity with American militia organizations from prior research prompted the undertaking of a more comprehensive study in this project. Although the surfeit of prospective international conflict topics was tantalizing, I chose to examine a U.S. issue by applying theoretical frameworks of international relations and conflict resolution, accordingly utilizing elements of both degree programmes.

### **Context**

Preliminary research revealed a dramatic rise in groups defining themselves as “Patriot Militias” within the United States, specifically since 2008. The Southern Poverty Law Center recently identified 1,274 active “patriot” groups in the U.S. The findings also determined that 334 of these organizations constituted militias.<sup>1</sup> A principal objective of this research seeks to ascertain how the phenomenon of Nationalism is a contributing factor to the perceived increase of these groups. While the rhetoric used by past militia and extremist organizations in the U.S. has repeatedly been anti-government, racist, anti-Semitic, and inflammatory, the discourse of new Patriot Militias appears to have shifted, vehemently citing constitutional grievances and failures within the U.S. Federal Government as the primary rationale for collective organization and mobilization. Concomitantly, the ideologies of these groups seem to exhibit extreme

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<sup>1</sup> SPLC, *Active 'Patriot' Groups in the United States in 2011*. 21 Nov. 2012. <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2012/spring/active-patriot-groups-in-the-united-states>. Issue 145, Spring 2012.

elements of Nationalism, a common theme of past extremist organizations in the U.S., which in turn has provided the impetus for the following study.

### **Research Questions**

To what extent does the phenomenon of Nationalism and nationalist ideology contribute to the mobilization of contemporary U.S. Patriot Militia movements? Are these groups exhibiting new forms of nationalist ideology? Do the grievances and ideologies espoused by these groups represent new brands of national discontent opposed to current U.S. governmental systems? How do these forms of nationalism operationalize, and how is current behavior different in comparison to previous U.S. militia organizations and historical movements of extreme Nationalism?

### **Methodology Overview**

The following research intends to present a cohesive analysis concerning extreme forms of nationalist ideology, subsequently investigating characteristics of collective, social conflict associated with such thought processes and behaviors. The project encompasses a comprehensive literature review of Nationalism and ideological frameworks, demonstrating chronological relevance to the primary case study: the Patriot Militia movement in the United States (U.S.).

An historical analysis of Nationalism, nationalist ideology, and past U.S. militia and extremist movements will be utilized to compare and contrast current behaviors of existing Patriot Militia organizations, potentially revealing new trends of nationalist ideology. The operationalization of this project involves the defining of concepts that are unclear, in order to categorize a set of definitions, relationships, parallels, interactions,

and theoretical processes which can then be used to produce substantive research and analysis. The exploration and operationalization of various concepts, by means of scholarly literature research, qualitative methodology, and critical analysis will frame the entirety of the research, thus clarifying and increasing the validity of arguments being made.

### **Research Limitations**

The major limitations of this research project were reflected upon once the writing process had concluded. A comprehensive research plan, outline, and proposal had been drafted preceding the study, but the process was significantly adapted as work commenced. The project had anticipated additional analysis of Patriot Militia discourse by monitoring specified militia blog sites, which would be quantified and presented to readers in statistical format.

Conceptually, that approach could strengthen the literature analysis portion of this thesis. Time constraints ultimately required the omission of statistical blog analysis, but similar methodology is expected in post-graduate research. Indeed, time and funding limitations narrowed this project to very detailed parameters. With more time, a complete analysis of militia web-activity is entirely possible, and could be comparatively applied to available literature. Moreover, a project that incorporated primary interviews or survey questionnaires with Patriot Militia members would distinctly contribute to the current body of work. The cost of trans-continental travel, in addition to time limitations, was prohibitive to such an undertaking in this project, but should be considered in future research aspirations.

**Ethical Considerations**

No human subjects were interviewed, surveyed, or contacted during this research project. Research methodology was literature based and did not require approval from the Human Subject Review Board (HSRB). In spite of this, ethical considerations were developed during the research and writing process. In particular, reflective practice was consistently integrated throughout the research, in order to advance professional objectivity while researching groups that do not align, on any level, with personal value orientations, whether political, philosophical, or moral. As a learning process, reflective practice encourages conflict resolution practitioners to consider instances of social discord through a lens of reflection. It supports the close examination of conflict phenomena by facilitating analytical processes of thoughtful reasoning and experiential learning.

Periods of reflection were an essential piece of the research method, largely used to consider positions and discursive practices of American extremist organizations. When studying such groups, there is a predisposition to hastily dismiss radical perspectives adopted by members. Although militia perspectives are not normative to American society, this research was entirely concerned with presenting an objective document that increased scholarship—the purpose of this research was to understand a particular phenomenon, not deride it.

For example, the source material of this project was carefully mapped before the study commenced. Many scholars reference the large bodies of work produced by the SPLC and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), whose contributions to the study of right-wing extremism and anti-racism are highly notable. This project cites the SPLC twice,

and does not cite any studies carried out by the ADL. By no means does this project undervalue the work of either organization, but, in an effort to increase objectivity, literature sources were chosen that did not explicitly condemn the militia movements in question. Understandably, the extreme discourse used by historical and current far-right movements is severely questioned in this project. The critical analysis gleaned from source material and theoretical frameworks, however, is the product of reflection, academic rigor, and intellectual struggle. This project is reliant on such ethical considerations, and has benefited from an integrated, reflective approach.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Literature Review of Nationalism**

The literature review pertaining to the following research includes an array of historical events and processes, nationalist phenomenon, and concepts that contribute to the study of nationalist ideology and U.S. Patriot Militias. In regards to nationalist ideology, the first section provides an overview of scholarly work dedicated to Nationalism itself, followed by a deeper analysis of recurrent ideological frameworks associated with Nationalism.

### **Nationalism Introduced**

The complexities of Nationalism should not be underestimated. Indeed, a significant collective of scholars, political analysts, and social scientists hotly dispute the various definitions and characteristics of Nationalism. The debate is centered on how and when the phenomenon of Nationalism originated, what Nationalism is precisely, and whether or not the reality of Nationalism positively reinforces human societies or promotes extreme social conflict.

The most contentious discussions between various schools of thought concern the “good” or “bad” nature of Nationalism. Leonard Stone is of the opinion that Nationalism is divisive and inherently violent, “As the potent 20th-century ideology, nationalism—especially in its violent, exclusive context—remains a global blemish to peace activists everywhere. Nationalism forms part of the logic of history. It can read like a

teleological, violent thriller.”<sup>2</sup> Other scholars, however, question the historicity of violent Nationalism, social conflict, and apparent correlations. An article by Siniša Malešević presents the following thesis, setting the foundational premise for much of his work on Nationalism:

This article challenges such views and attempts to show not only that there are no natural linkages between nationalism and violence, but more importantly, that the connections between these two phenomena can only emerge under specific historical conditions. In particular, I focus on the significance of organizational, ideological, and microsituational factors, whose coalescence is necessary for making nationalism seem intrinsically violent and, violence appear to be inherently nationalist.<sup>3</sup>

The lines of contestation become even more vague when one considers the substantial differences of rigid perspectives in comparison to those that suggest a more ambiguous outlook. Jan Pettman, heavily influenced by the work of Rajagopalan Radharishnan, shares his thoughts on the shifting nature of Nationalism:

Nationalism is not a monolithic phenomenon to be deemed entirely good or entirely bad; nationalism is a contradictory discourse and its internal contradictions need to be unpacked in their historical specificity. The historical

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<sup>2</sup> Leonard Stone. "Nationalist consciousness." *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 10.2 (1998): 203. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Siniša Malešević. "Is Nationalism Intrinsically Violent?." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 19.1 (2013): 12-13. Print.

agency of nationalism has been sometimes hegemonic though often merely dominant, sometimes emancipatory though often repressive, sometimes progressive though often traditional and reactionary.<sup>4</sup>

The ongoing debates between intellectuals are important to any research concerning Nationalism and will be further detailed shortly. The purpose of the brief discussion provided is simply meant to highlight a few elements that pose the greatest difficulty to those who study Nationalism. Questions of origination and definability, as conferred by scholars of Nationalism, will be explored next, but it is important to note the crux of the matter: does Nationalism promote transformative collectives of human society, or rather, does it foment exclusionary mechanisms that precipitate social conflict? The phenomenon of nationalist ideology provides substantive scholarship that works to clarify that question, but one must first appreciate the literature dedicated to Nationalism itself.

Craig Calhoun provides an accessible, comprehensive synthesis of Nationalism that is arguably the most influential overview to this research.<sup>5</sup> He carefully considers the multi-faceted characteristics of Nationalism and the work of other scholars, objectively relaying key elements of the Nationalism phenomenon that coalesce to clarify questions and ease readership. The premise of future arguments made in this thesis relies

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<sup>4</sup> Jan Jindy Pettman. "Nationalism and After." *Review of International Studies* 24 (1998): 154. Print.

<sup>5</sup> Craig Calhoun. *Nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, (1997): Print.

heavily on the socially constructed features of Nationalism gleaned from Calhoun's work, among others.

Calhoun shares Michel Foucault and Timothy Brennan's perspective that Nationalism is a "discursive formation", referred to by Calhoun as, "a way of speaking that shapes our consciousness, but also is problematic enough that it keeps generating more issues and questions, keeps propelling us into further talk, keeps producing debates over how to think about it."<sup>6</sup> If Nationalism is discursive, then a progressive line of inquiry must determine how Nationalism as a discourse manifests itself. "This way of thinking about social solidarity, collective identity, and related questions (like political legitimacy) plays a crucial role both in the production of nationalist self-understandings and the recognition of nationalist claims by others. It is in this sense that Benedict Anderson has described nations as 'imagined communities'."<sup>7</sup> Socially constructed paradigms of community, sovereignty, and nation (amongst others) are imperative to even a cursory study of Nationalism. It is through a lens of critical analysis that one begins to expose elements of social construction and foundational aspects of Nationalism. Anderson contends that, "All communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity-genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."<sup>8</sup> Once social construction is recognized, at least as a contributor to Nationalism, tangible features of Nation and nationhood begin to take form.

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<sup>6</sup> Calhoun 3.

<sup>7</sup> Calhoun 4.

<sup>8</sup> Benedict Anderson. *Imagined communities*. New York: Verso, (1991): 6. Print.

## **Nation and Nationalism**

Definitions and subsequent terminology of Nation differ, but facets that contribute to nationhood generally consist of at least some of the following characteristics proposed by Calhoun. Even Calhoun, however, recognizes the ambiguity of his synthesis, “The following features of the rhetoric of nation seem most important, though none of them is precisely definitive and each may be present in greater or lesser degree in any nation.”<sup>9</sup>

According to Calhoun, ten features of social phenomena are highly significant to Nation definability. The rhetoric of “boundaries”, “indivisibility”, and “sovereignty” is ranked high in the discourse of Nation, suggesting an imperative need for nations to differentiate from alternate national entities, while concomitantly strengthening national autonomy and independence.<sup>10</sup> The list of characteristics accent features that meld political discourse with individual membership, including “an ascending notion of legitimacy”, “popular participation in collective affairs”, “direct membership”, “culture”, “temporal depth”, “common descent or racial characteristics”, and “special historical or even sacred relations to a certain territory”.<sup>11</sup> To summarize, Calhoun delineates the importance of national cohesion through participatory processes and political legitimization, which enables and bolsters socially constructed perceptions of tradition, culture, historical origins, ethnic identity, and even sacredness associated with the Nation itself.

While scholars exhibit contrasting perspectives of Nation and nationhood, those who study Nationalism usually share similar markers outlined by Calhoun, although

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<sup>9</sup> Calhoun 4.

<sup>10</sup> Calhoun 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Calhoun 4-5.

analysis is often carried out by utilizing alternate terminology and assigning divergent levels of significance to various features. Anthony Smith's extensive work on Nationalism verifies comparable features to Calhoun's conceptualizations of Nation and national identity. Smith provides five attributes considered fundamental to Nation: "historic territory or homeland", "common myths and historical memories", "a common mass public culture", "common legal rights and duties for all members", and "common economy with territorial mobility for members".<sup>12</sup>

To better emphasize the complexities of Nation, as a concept, it is necessary to consider yet another perspective. Ernest Gellner's work exemplifies a focus on Nation that is driven primarily by cultural homogeneity:

Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they *recognize* each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words, *nations maketh man*; nations are the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities. A mere category of persons (say, occupants of a given territory, or speakers of a given language, for example) becomes a nation if and when the members of the category firmly recognize certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership of it. It is their recognition of each other as fellows of this kind which turns them into a nation,

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<sup>12</sup> Anthony D. Smith. *National identity*. London: Penguin Books, (1991): 14. Print.

and not the other shared attributes, whatever they might be, which separate that category from non-members.”<sup>13</sup>

It is in this way that Gellner, Smith, and Calhoun employ flexible frameworks of Nation to approach the phenomenon of Nationalism. Although the frameworks complement each other regarding some salient features, it is readily apparent that more emphasis is placed on some elements (culture in Gellner’s analysis), revealing differences of opinion and alternate conceptualizations of nationhood. When approaching the conundrum of Nationalism, it is perhaps more important to recognize features that many presume representative of Nation and nationhood, thereby deconstructing the various features of Nationalism as they apply to the socially constructed discourse of Nation and all its various accompaniments. Gellner suggests, “It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round. Admittedly, nationalism uses the pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth, though it uses them very selectively, and it most often transforms them radically.”<sup>14</sup> It is for this reason that a brief reflection has been provided on the concept of Nation—understandably succinct as Nationalism itself is the primary focus of this project, not particular definitions of Nation.

Nevertheless, one must be cognizant of discursive frameworks that designate social and political groupings of national consciousness, as both work in tandem to erect concepts of Nation and Nationalism. Only then can historical origins, identity-framing

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<sup>13</sup> Ernest Gellner. *Nations and nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, (1983): 7. Print.

<sup>14</sup> Gellner 66.

mechanisms, elements of traditional and territorial compositions, patriotism, political structuring, and social conflict related to nationalist phenomena begin to be unraveled.

### **Origins of Nationalism**

Nationalism is widely considered an attribute of modernity. Calhoun posits, “It is not just recent, it is one of the definitive features of the modern era. This is the era in which the discourse of nationalism has become all but universal, and has been linked closely to the practical power and administrative capacities of states...”<sup>15</sup> Differing viewpoints are accessible in the scholarship, and definitive time frames of Nationalism concerning specific dates of origination, do vary. Does not the Battle of Agincourt—between the powerful French and English states—exemplify nationalist dispositions?<sup>16</sup> Are ancient Biblical narratives of boundaries, territorial rights, and chosen peoples not symbiotic with nationalist discourse? Hans Kohn says, “The Reformation, especially in its Calvinistic form, revived the nationalism of the Old Testament. Under the favorable circumstances which had developed in England, a new national consciousness of England as the godly people penetrated the whole nation in the revolution of the seventeenth century.”<sup>17</sup> The arguments against the modernity of Nationalism, while interesting to debate, are not of major consequence to this project. Scholars much more practiced than I have wrestled with questions of modernity and Nationalism throughout their intellectual careers, and I acquiesce to their knowledge base for the sake of brevity and clear purpose.

Llobera states:

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<sup>15</sup> Calhoun 12.

<sup>16</sup> See Calhoun, page 10, for a discussion of Nationalism and modernity.

<sup>17</sup> Hans Kohn "The Nature of Nationalism." *The American Political Science Review* 33.6 (1939): 1017. Print.

The two major processes of ‘national’ independence outside Europe took place in the aftermath of two specific political events which were ‘nationally’ charged: the American and the French Revolutions and the two World Wars. The former proclaimed that government should be based on the will of the people and that by people was meant, at least in theory, the totality of the citizens of the nation; the latter saw the beginning of the end of colonialism. What we can observe in both historical periods is that a specific form of anticolonial ‘nationalism’—if this is the appropriate term—makes its appearance.<sup>18</sup>

The literature seems to indicate that the phenomenon of Nationalism, in all its complexities and multi-faceted dimensions, is most readily distinguishable in the period during and following the French Revolution, accurately discernible between the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and the beginning of the nineteenth.<sup>19</sup> Eric Hobsbawm comments:

The word ‘nationalism’ proved to be more convenient than the clumsy ‘principle of nationality’ which had been part of the vocabulary of European politics since about 1830, and so it came to be used also for all movements to whom the ‘national cause’ was paramount in politics: that is to say for all demanding the right to self-determination, i.e. in the last analysis to form an independent state, for some nationally defined group. For the number of such movements, or at least

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<sup>18</sup> Josep Llobera. *Recent Theories of Nationalism*. Tech. no. 164. Barcelona: Institut De Ciències Polítiques I Socials (ICPS), (1999): 21-22 Print.

<sup>19</sup> Calhoun 9-11.

of leaders claiming to speak for such movements, and their political significance, increased strikingly in our period.<sup>20</sup>

Again, the literature fluctuates on exact dates, but Nationalism as a political and discursive formation must be considered for the purposes of this project, although the presence of citizen armies, state formation, and ethnic groupings of humans were clearly present before the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Hans Kohn traced the evolution of this phenomenon:

The growth of nationalism is the process of integration of the masses of the people into a common political form. Nationalism therefore presupposes the existence, in fact or as an ideal, of a centralized form of government over a distinct and large territory. This form was created by the absolute monarchs, who were the pace-makers of modern nationalism; the French Revolution inherited and continued the centralizing tendencies of the kings, but at the same time it filled the central organization with a new spirit and gave it a power of cohesion unknown before. Nationalism is unthinkable before the emergence of the modern state in the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Nationalism accepted this form, but changed it by animating it with a new feeling of life and with a new religious fervor.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Eric Hobsbawm. *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*. New York: Pantheon, (1987): 143. Print.

<sup>21</sup> Kohn 1002.

Calhoun clarifies a final point for consideration on the topic of state formation, historical origins, and the advent of Nationalism:

State formation brought citizen armies, increased administrative unification, road building, linguistic standardization, popular educational systems, occasions for popular political participation, and many other changes that helped produce a new consciousness of national identity. But states did not simply create nations.<sup>22</sup>

Definitions of Nationalism have yet to be clarified and will be explored in the next section. The purpose of discussing the genesis of Nationalism is three-fold: (1) one must be aware of multiple historical perspectives before delving into current happenings; (2) the density of Nationalism is so vast that any research would be incomplete without a point of beginning; and (3) this project contextually accepts the modern nature of Nationalism.

### **Nationalism Operationalized**

Defining Nationalism is an arduous task, plainly evident from previous sections concerning Nation and the origins of Nationalism. If the literature is so divided on what constitutes a Nation, then concepts of Nationalism, replete with abstract rationalizations of discursive arrangements, political movements, and ideological structures, seem even more unlikely to provide lucidity. In spite of this, Nationalism must be operationalized to support the theoretical underpinnings of this project before studying the intricacies of nationalist ideology.

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<sup>22</sup> Calhoun 10.

Calhoun presents a multidimensional perspective of Nationalism. His framework relies heavily on the discursive nature of Nationalism, as previously mentioned, but also details project-oriented and evaluative features that supplement a broad point of view. In reference to Nationalism as a discourse, Calhoun suggests that it acts as, “The production of a cultural understanding and rhetoric which leads people throughout the world to think and frame their aspirations in terms of the idea of nation and national identity, and the production of particular versions of nationalist thought and language in particular settings and traditions.”<sup>23</sup> Thematic elements of culture, therefore, are intertwined with the discourse of Nationalism, lending more credence to the socially constructed character of nationalist thought processes. The second dimension of Calhoun’s analysis considers Nationalism as a “project” that entails, “social movements and state policies by which people attempt to advance the interests of collectivities they understand as nations...”<sup>24</sup> In addition, project-oriented framing involves the search for, “increased participation in an existing state, national autonomy, independence and self-determination, or the amalgamation of territories.”<sup>25</sup> The final feature is conceptually the most litigious element of Calhoun’s framework:

There is nationalism as evaluation: political and cultural ideologies that claim superiority for a particular nation; these are often associated with movements or state policies, but need not be. In this third sense, nationalism is often given the

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<sup>23</sup> Calhoun 8.

<sup>24</sup> Calhoun 8.

<sup>25</sup> Calhoun 8.

status of an ethical imperative: national boundaries *ought* to coincide with state boundaries, for example; members of a nation *ought* to conform to its moral values, etc. It is through some of the actions that follow from these ethical imperatives that nationalism comes to be associated with *excesses* of loyalty to one's nation—as in ethnic cleansing, ideologies of national purification, and hostility to foreigners.<sup>26</sup>

An evaluative mechanism, as presented by Calhoun, is significantly correlative to nationalist ideology, a feature regularly debated by scholars of Nationalism. Future sections concerning ideological compositions of Nationalism will be offered in this project, but the current sequence of operational research assists in building a general context of Nationalism and the eventual metamorphosis of collective nationalist ideology.

Ernest Gellner further delineates Nationalism as a political movement that legitimizes a mutually beneficial relationship of Nation and politics:

Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist *sentiment* is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist *movement* is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Calhoun 8.

<sup>27</sup> Gellner 1.

If Nationalism is politically and socially discursive, evaluative, and movement oriented, then what force beckons assimilation into the respective Nation and acceptance of constructed national identities? The psychology of Nationalism is open to debate, but even scholars who posit primitive origins inevitably return to social construction narratives. Kohn begins his analysis with a grandiose perspective of primordial beginnings:

For its composite texture, nationalism used, in its growth, some of the oldest and most primitive feelings of man which throughout history we find as important factors in the formation of social groups. There is a natural tendency in man—and we mean by “natural tendency” a tendency which, having been produced by social circumstances since time practically immemorial, appears to us as natural—to love his birthplace or the place of his childhood sojourn, its surroundings, its climate, the contours of hills and valleys, of rivers and trees.<sup>28</sup>

In Kohn’s analysis, the self-identification with fixed geography becomes exclusive, as perceptions of security are most reinforced when familiar language, customs, and peoples are located in the recognizable locale. Also according to Kohn, humans can accept fleeting interruptions of familiar social experiences, but the pull of one’s native environment is quite potent:

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<sup>28</sup> Kohn 1002-1003.

We are all subject to the immense power of habitude, and even if in a later stage of development we are attracted by the unknown and by change, we delight to come back and be at rest in the reassuring sight of the familiar. Man has an easily understandable preference for his own language as the only one which he thoroughly understands and in which he feels at home. He prefers native customs and native food to alien ones, which appear to him unintelligible and undigestible. Should he travel, he will return to his chair and his table with a feeling of relaxation and will be elated by the joy of finding himself again at home, away from the strain of a sojourn in foreign lands and contact with foreign peoples.<sup>29</sup>

Potential suppositions of origin aside, Kohn quickly returns to a discourse of socially constructed phenomena. The modernity of Nationalism, presented in previous sections, supplants a perspective based solely on primordialist thought:

Again this love of the homeland, which is regarded as the heart of patriotism, is not a “natural” phenomenon, but an artificial product of historical and intellectual development. The homeland which a man “naturally” loves is his native village or valley or city, a small territory well known in all its concrete details, abounding in personal memories, and in which his life is generally lived throughout its whole span. The whole territory inhabited by what we should consider today as a nationality, a territory frequently distinguished by great diversity of landscape and climate, was practically unknown to the average man,

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<sup>29</sup> Kohn 1002-1003.

and could become known only by instruction or travel, which before the age of nationalism were limited to a very small minority.<sup>30</sup>

Nationalism then, can also be perceived as a “state of mind” or “idea” heavily influenced by identity-framing mechanisms and group conceptualizations of tradition, culture, and history.<sup>31</sup> Nationalism as a “state of mind” affects group perceptions of social organization by, “permeating the large majority of a people and claiming to permeate all its members, which recognizes the nation-state as the ideal form of political organization and the nationality as the source of all creative cultural energy and of economic well-being.”<sup>32</sup> When nationalist consciousness takes root, “The supreme loyalty of man is therefore due to his nationality, as his own life is supposedly rooted in and made possible by its welfare.”<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the aura of Nationalism can be judged an idea that, “fills man's brain and heart with new thoughts and new sentiments, and drives him to translate his consciousness into deeds of organized action.”<sup>34</sup> In summation, “Nationality is therefore not only a group held together and animated by common consciousness; it also seeks to find its expression in what it regards as the highest form of organized activity, a sovereign state.”<sup>35</sup> The expression of collective alignment with national, sovereign organization is considered advantageous to group security, thereby instilling strong positions of duty and loyalty to the respective nation.

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<sup>30</sup> Kohn 1006.

<sup>31</sup> See Kohn, pages 1014-1016, for a larger discussion of these concepts.

<sup>32</sup> Kohn 1014.

<sup>33</sup> Kohn 1014.

<sup>34</sup> Kohn 1016.

<sup>35</sup> Kohn 1016.

Accordingly, the pervasiveness of history, tradition, and identity framing within the discourse of Nationalism sustains perceptions of national fervor and obligation.

Calhoun proposes two aspects of history that influence Nationalism:

On the one hand, nationalism commonly encourages the production of historical accounts of the nation. Indeed, the modern discipline of history is very deeply shaped by the tradition of producing national histories designed to give readers and students a sense of their collective identity.<sup>36</sup>

The reinforcement of collective identity creation is apparent across global societies, but Calhoun's second point describes negative connotations associated with constructed identities, "On the other hand, however, nationalists are prone, at the very least, to the production of Whig histories, favourable accounts of 'how we came to be who we are'."<sup>37</sup> Harry Anastasiou, whose work is heavily considered in this project, warns against the danger of such developments. He argues, "In its essence, the nationalist view of history rests on a collective mental construct. It develops through a peculiar form of highly selective memory that exaggeratedly highlights certain historical facts, evades and suppresses others, and outright invents others."<sup>38</sup> A nationalist perspective of history thus, "conjoints real and imaginary historical facts as to tailor the past in a manner that fits and affirms nationalism's mythical notion of *the nation* as a

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<sup>36</sup> Calhoun 51.

<sup>37</sup> Calhoun 51.

<sup>38</sup> Harry Anastasiou. *The broken olive branch: nationalism, ethnic conflict and the quest for peace in Cyprus*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, (2006): 27. Print.

grandiose, absolute, and sacred entity.”<sup>39</sup> In later publications, Anastasiou explores the authority associated with sacredness of Nation, “One of the powerful ways in which nationalism becomes historically instated is through its presumption that the nation is sacred—an attribute that many liken to a kind of secular equivalent of the church.”<sup>40</sup> Regardless of the accuracy or fictitiousness linked to a representative nationalist discourse, the immediacy and rituals of tradition buttress the perceived historicity and alleged sacredness of Nation. Calhoun comments:

Some nationalist self-understandings may be historically dubious yet very real as aspects of lived experience and bases for action. They are taken as unconscious presuppositions by people when they consciously consider the options open to them. Other claims, by contrast, may fail to persuade because they are too manifestly manipulated, or because the myth that is being proffered does not speak to the circumstances and practical commitments of the people in question. In between are claims that are accepted as part of orthodox ideology, but which people are aware may be questioned. People may even join in public rituals that affirm narratives they know to be problematic, but gain an identification with these as ‘our stories’, a sense of collusion in the production of these fictions, and a recognition of them as background conditions of everyday life.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Anastasiou 27.

<sup>40</sup> Harry Anastasiou. “Encountering Nationalism: The Contribution of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution.” In Dennis J. D. Sandole, Sean Byrne, Ingrid Sandole-Staroste, Jessica Senehi (Eds.) *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*. New York: Routledge, (2008): 31. Print

<sup>41</sup> Calhoun 34.

A nationalist discourse of history and tradition thus empowers the sacredness ascribed to collective, national identity. Those salient markers of national distinctiveness coalesce to frame identity in nationalist terms—a feature imperative to note in the literature on Nationalism. Calhoun continues, “The people, the nation, must be capable of a singular identity and—at least ideally—a singular voice. The nation is thus not simply a static category but a creature of common commitment to the whole and to the principles it embodies.”<sup>42</sup> Consider also the implications of ascribed identity to individuals within a particular Nation, a “problematic” occurrence as identified by Calhoun, “It has been the tacit assumption of modern social and cultural thought that people are normally members of one and only one nation, that they are members of one and only one race, one gender, and one sexual orientation, and that each of these memberships describes neatly and concretely some aspect of their being.”<sup>43</sup> In addition, the absence of a recognized state does not preclude powerful feelings of Nationalism amongst individuals. Montserrat Guibernau clarifies the issue of unrecognized statehood and Nationalism:

Memories of a time when the nation was independent, endured collective oppression, or attained international leadership, together with the current desire for self-determination, strengthen a sense of common identity among those who belong to the nation, even if it lacks a state. National identity reflects the

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<sup>42</sup> Calhoun 77.

<sup>43</sup> Calhoun 18.

sentiment of belonging to the nation regardless of whether it has or does not have a state of its own.<sup>44</sup>

The complexities of social identity are explored in the latter part of this project, specifically in relation to Nationalism and primary case studies. The literature, however, has particularly emphasized the correspondence between nationalist discourse and national identity, which is rigorously sustained by individual and collective perceptions of history, tradition, and sacredness. The closing pages of Calhoun's *Nationalism (Concepts in Social Thought)* demonstrate and synthesize the assessed scholarship:

Finally, the modern discourse of national identity is closely linked to the idea of the individual. Nations are constructed as 'super-individuals' on the one hand and categories of equivalent individuals on the other. An immediate, direct relationship is posited between individuals and their nations: national identity assumes a special priority over other collective identities in the construction of personal identity. Membership in a nation is not derived from membership in any other collectivity—family, community, etc.; it may be reinforced by kinship or other network bonds, but it is of a different form and order. Invoking or giving voice to large-scale categorical identities enables the discourse of nationalism to situate people in the world order (or disorder).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Montserrat Guibernau. "Anthony D. Smith On Nations And National Identity: A Critical Assessment." *Nations and Nationalism* 10.1-2 (2004): 135. Print.

<sup>45</sup> Calhoun 125.

The literature research of Nationalism has thus far circumvented definitive correlations to social conflict. But an unavoidable element of Nationalism, the inherent presence of national exclusivity to be precise, is necessary to this research. A conflict analysis of nationalist movements, sentiment, and discourse is wholly concerned with dimensions of Nationalism that cause and contribute to conflict. A significant case study in this project—historical movements of extremist groups in the U.S.—presents an ideological discourse rooted in extreme Nationalism and resultant social conflict. For that reason, Anastasiou’s work is central to this project, and is consistently referenced as scholarship that incorporates specific perspectives of conflict and conflict analysis that are at times lacking or avoided by other scholars. The nature of this graduate program, especially in regards to conflict analysis, security processes, and resolution frameworks, supports the need for a perspective of Nationalism that is largely attentive to conflict events. Anastasiou provides that perspective, which further serves to introduce the nationalist ideology section of this project:

Nationalism may thus be understood as a powerful historical phenomenon that is defined by *the unprecedented moral absolutization of the nation, its freedom, its interest, its community, its identity, and its power, in combination with the derivative presumption that its supreme moral status furnishes thereby “the right” to employ all means, including adversarial and lethal means, in the*

*nation's defense, sustenance, advancement, expanding powers, and alleged "destined" historical realization.*<sup>46</sup>

Utilizing such an operational definition of Nationalism is controversial, evidenced by differing scholarly perspectives reviewed in this project and in preliminary research gathering. I acknowledge the subjective nature of Anastasiou's definition, and accept that such a definition is necessary from a conflict analysis perspective. Moreover, this study ascribes an operational use of the preceding definition to movements of extreme Nationalism, while recognizing the literature that considers less virulent forms of Nationalism a benefit to modern political and ideological discourses. Forthcoming sections will consider multiple perspectives of nationalist ideology, endeavoring to clarify further questions of correlative features associated with Nationalism and social conflict.

### **Nationalist Ideology Operationalized**

The origins of nationalist ideology do indeed coincide with Nationalism itself, but specific world-views ensconced within the nationalist awareness are delineated within the current section. Calhoun reiterates the modernity of Nationalism, stating, "In the late nineteenth century, precisely as the globalization of political and economic organization and the worldwide flows of culture were reaching unprecedented levels, the urge to organize social life in terms of sharp boundaries, national identities, and essentialist

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<sup>46</sup> Anastasiou (2008) 30.

cultural categories likewise reached a peak.”<sup>47</sup> The extraordinary spread of Nationalism during that period, especially in Europe, ushered in an era of social and political boundaries that marked the beginning of sweeping ideological pursuits. He continues, “In Europe, it was in this period that nationalists began effectively to urge immigration controls: in this period they created the standing citizen armies that fought World War I; in this period they opposed socialism, in part, precisely because it was internationalist. It was in this period that modern anti-Semitism took shape.”<sup>48</sup> Political strategies entirely concerned with aspirations of sovereignty and singular national identity proliferated on a scale never before witnessed. Calhoun states, “And it was in this period that nationalism became most conclusively identified, in the European context, with movements for secession rather than amalgamation of existing states. No era placed greater emphasis on the autonomy of the nation-state or the capacity of the idea of nation to define large-scale collective identities.”<sup>49</sup> The spread of Nationalism expanded rapidly, in part because the world itself was experiencing a dramatic shift of international consciousness; states were no longer concerned only with neighboring entities, they were aware of distant happenings and the significance of international events to proximate territories.<sup>50</sup>

Hobsbawm also comments on this period in which the rise of Nationalism began to reveal ideologies grounded in sovereignty, autonomy, and aggrandizement of nationhood:

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<sup>47</sup> Calhoun 20.

<sup>48</sup> Calhoun 20.

<sup>49</sup> Calhoun 20.

<sup>50</sup> Calhoun 20.

In the period from 1880 to 1914 nationalism took a dramatic leap forward, and its ideological and political content was transformed. Its very vocabulary indicates the significance of these years. For the word 'nationalism' itself first appeared at the end of the nineteenth century to describe groups of right-wing ideologists in France and Italy, keen to brandish the national flag against foreigners, liberals and socialists and in favour of that aggressive expansion of their own state which was to become so characteristic of such movements. This was also the period when the song 'Deutschland Uber Alles' (Germany above all others) replaced rival compositions to become the actual national anthem of Germany.<sup>51</sup>

Historical narratives and assumed ethnic identities were prevailing contributors in the discourse of early nationalist ideology. Both were strategically employed to augment collective ideologies centered on the rightness of a particular nation. Constructed narratives of national history embody the discourse of Nationalism by lauding triumphant epochs. Those traditions of pride are dutifully transferred to subsequent generations of citizens, while memorialized failures and endured sufferings are utilized to sustain recognition of past traumas. Ramsay Muir discusses narrative traditions:

It is probable that the most potent of all nation-moulding factors, the one indispensable factor which must be present whatever else be lacking, is the possession of a common tradition, a memory of sufferings endured or victories won in common, expressed in song and legend, in the dear names of great

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<sup>51</sup> Hobsbawm 142.

personalities that seem to embody in themselves the character and ideals of the nation, in the names also of sacred places wherein the national memory is enshrined... Heroic achievements, agonies heroically endured, these are the sublime food by which the spirit of nationhood is nourished: from these are born the sacred and imperishable traditions that make the soul of nations.<sup>52</sup>

Even that early perspective recognized the influence of traditional narratives in national consciousness. The observation by Muir is particularly astute because his analysis of national memory and tradition accurately depicts foundational aspects of Nationalism and associative perceptions of ethnic groupings. If collective historical narratives posit the danger of external ethnic groups who allegedly contribute or contributed to national suffering, then those external groups are envisaged as the enemy. In addition, contrasting internal ethnic groupings can motivate extreme nationalist discourse that attributes responsibility for the decline, trauma, or stagnancy of the nation to specific ethnic groups within the nation, on occasion resulting in cases of extreme social violence. Calhoun notes these features:

Leaders who mobilize people on the basis of putatively primordial ties sometimes adopt nationalist rhetoric and sometimes try to assert definitions of nations primarily in terms of ethnic identities—occasionally with disastrous, even genocidal results. Where ideas of national or ethnic identity merge with racial

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<sup>52</sup> Ramsay Muir, *Nationalism and Internationalism: The Culmination of Modern History* London: Constable, (1917): 48-49. Print.

thinking, primordialism is boosted and made especially dangerous—witness not just Germany under Hitler but Burundi and Rwanda more recently. But genocide does not automatically follow from the joining of racial thought to nationalism; it is a more complicated result of both ethnic diversity and generally state-centered political projects.<sup>53</sup>

The consequence of collective ideology rooted in nationalist discourse accordingly spurs the likelihood of violent conflict, especially when external or internal ethnicities threaten the perception of national cohesion. Nevertheless, adversarial racial or ethnic discourses coupled with nationalist ideologies are not immediately consistent, but do work to expand political rationalizations of what, or who, is considered subversive to national identity. On this, Calhoun comments, “The impact of joining racial thinking with nationalism is not only to stigmatize ‘aliens in our midst’, but to reinforce national solidarity against internal cultural distinctions.”<sup>54</sup>

In addition, revisionist processes are common within nationalist historical narratives, whereby states, revolutionary groups, political institutions, and others manipulate tradition and history to accommodate positions and interests considered paramount to the national cause. The presence of negationism is significant on a variety of levels. Consider the demonization of external or internal ethnic groups throughout modern history, and the rampant denial of national shortcomings or committed atrocities.

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<sup>53</sup> Calhoun 35.

<sup>54</sup> Calhoun 35.

Those endeavors are only made possible by the removal or omission of historical impediments, as Rustow discusses:

The early nationalist, like the religious reformer . . . professes to be rediscovering when indeed he is innovating. History serves him as a grab-bag from which he instinctively selects past themes that suit his present purpose . . . the historical themes he invokes are significant not as hypotheses of historic causation but as part of a psychological search for symbols of confidence in the present.<sup>55</sup>

Ethnic and historical origins are, therefore, continuously interconnected within particular nationalist frameworks. The power of origin myths lends credence to the nationalist understanding of specific ethnic beginnings, encapsulating the struggles and triumphs experienced by the original ethnic group and the respective nation. “Indeed, the writing of national historical narratives is so embedded in the discourse of nationalism that it almost always depends rhetorically on the presumption of some kind of pre-existing national identity in order to give the story a beginning.”<sup>56</sup> The linkages shared between nationalist discourse, ethnic origins, and history are further deliberated by Calhoun:

Ethnic origins are a dominant theme in nationalist rhetoric. At the same time, some nationalist discourse does focus on great acts of founding or revolution.

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<sup>55</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow. *A world of nations; problems of political modernization*. Washington: Brookings Institution, (1967): 40-42. Print.

<sup>56</sup> Calhoun 53.

The emphasis is typically on the historical novelty of the nation brought forth by the self-constituting action of its people. Sometimes redemption of a problematic history, rejuvenation in the face of decline, or living up to the potential of a heroic past is also thematized.<sup>57</sup>

Reliance on constructed historical narratives and rigid identity framing begins to illuminate an exclusionary ideology. The nationalist consciousness promotes national infallibility by denying faults attributed to the nation and ascribing blame to external or internal groups perceived to be non-compliant, dissident, or alien. In essence, the sacredness of Nation is never accountable for shortcomings, as Anastasiou states:

Moreover, nationalist historiography consistently differentiates disasters and tragedies that may appear in national history as events that were essentially and in principle not the fault of *the nation*. It always interprets the dark sides of history in a manner that guards the alleged infallibility and thus sacred status of *the nation*. The nationalist mind usually resorts to two types of attribution to explain things that had historically gone wrong: it finds fault either with an internal enemy that it identifies as immoral and treasonous, or an external enemy it deems treacherous and deceitful; that resorted to unfair play or brute force. In this way, the nationalist mind, by psychological and mental default, keeps *the nation* morally unblemished in perpetuity. Simultaneously however, it keeps the

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<sup>57</sup> Calhoun 58.

nation fundamentally free from accountability and any kind of historical responsibility.<sup>58</sup>

Problematic features of nation-centric ideology become more transparent when conceptualizations of national identity are built on questionable perspectives of history. Gellner notes: “Generally speaking, nationalist ideology suffers from pervasive false consciousness. Its myths invert reality: it claims to defend folk culture while in fact it is forging a high culture; it claims to protect an old folk society while in fact helping to build up an anonymous mass society.”<sup>59</sup> John Coakley also synthesizes the historiography of nationalist sentiment:

This suggests that nationalist historiography will fill one or more of five types of function: definition of the conceptual boundaries of the nation; reinforcement of a sense of pride in national achievements; capacity to promote commiseration over unjust suffering that justifies compensation; legitimization of the current national struggle by reference to its roots in the past; and inspiration regarding the bright future of the nation.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, Anastasiou and Stone critically analyze the historicity of nationalist ideology, the sacredness associated with Nation, the disruptive nature of extreme

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<sup>58</sup> Anastasiou (2006) 13.

<sup>59</sup> Gellner 124.

<sup>60</sup> John Coakley. "Mobilizing The Past: Nationalist Images Of History." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 10.4 (2004): 541. Print.

Nationalism, the prevalence of exclusionary processes, and the potential consequences of extreme nationalist leanings. The following research highlights characteristics of nationalist ideology critical to this project by examining elements of nationalist ideology relevant to conflict analysis methodology. Anastasiou begins by noting the aforementioned, exclusionary nature of extreme nationalism, which is particularly noticeable in skewed historical narratives:

Centered on a constructed, aggrandized notion of *the nation*, nationalist historiography projects a glorified image of the nation into a superlative, primal past, transposed by necessity into a compelling, duty-bound present, and an infinite, grandiose future. It cultivates a monocentric, narcissistic concept of the nation's life-world, a teleological perception of the nation's history and an asymmetrical distribution of positive values and rightness identifying the "good" with one's own nation and the "bad" with that of the "other", particularly of "the enemy other". In so doing, nationalist historiography presents the nation as an inerrant, eternal political entity, concealing its historical follies and the crucial fact that the nationalist concept and its objectified derivative, the nation-state, was a historical product of the nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup>

The sacredness of Nation is accordingly entrenched in nationalist ideology. Anastasiou observes the existence of moral imperatives to defend and promote national interests, regardless of external influences or obligations. Understandably, his assertions

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<sup>61</sup> Anastasiou (2008) 31-32.

are troubling to scholars of international relations and conflict analysis alike, both fields being concerned with methods of internal and external cooperation.

Thus understood, the nationalist approach to nationhood places the nation in an untouchable “moral realm”, beyond question, reproach, and accountability. Sadly, the concept of national sovereignty and self-determination, abstractly asserted as the cornerstone of world order and stability, has in practice been framed and conditioned by nationalism through the presumption that in the final analysis the “right” to pursue policies, devise strategies, and take actions unilaterally supersedes the requirement for bi- or multilateral deliberations. From this perspective, the nationalist mind views even international law as subsidiary and secondary to the status of the nation.<sup>62</sup>

From Anastasiou’s perspective, extreme nationalist ideology disrupts constructive methods of communication. Since such ideologies are so unyielding, the potential for collaborative processes of resolution decreases, which in turn leads to social conflict and instances of tremendous violence. He continues:

Under these conditions, the prospect for international and/or interethnic dialogue, negotiation, or relationship-building becomes highly restrictive, circumstantial, and transient. As attested by the two World Wars, innumerable intra- and interstate wars, anti-colonial revolutions, Cold War proxy wars, the ethnic

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<sup>62</sup> Anastasiou (2008) 32.

conflicts that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, and more recently the Iraq War, the nationalist approach to ethno-national politics has proven to be disastrous in both intrastate and international arenas.<sup>63</sup>

The power of “Us vs. Them” thought processes is inextricably part of nationalist understanding, contending the otherness of individuals or groups whom have not integrated within the nation.<sup>64</sup> In any particular nationalist discourse, the exclusion or marginalization of groups deemed unacceptable to national identity formation serves two purposes: (1) it strengthens national consciousness by clarifying ambiguous understandings of what, or whom, is acceptable to national identity, and (2) it provides the unifying threat upon which nationalist discourse mobilizes. Stone comments, “In other words, what ‘They’ do affects and shapes ‘Us’. We can locate a central pillar of logic, a primary structure of feeling, at the center of this consciousness. National solidarity, writ large in the discourse of nationalist consciousness, provides a bedrock, a platform of understanding that underpins nationalist consciousness.”<sup>65</sup> Stone reiterates the interconnectedness of such discursive practices, conceivably offering the most significant feature of sustainable nationalist ideology:

A nationalist consciousness gets its distinctiveness from a single unifying nationalist experience and perspective. “Being” nationalist is to be a nationalist by virtue of an external national grouping. It constitutes a discourse of difference.

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<sup>63</sup> Anastasiou (2008) 32.

<sup>64</sup> Stone 204.

<sup>65</sup> Stone 204.

The presence of the “Other”, and the “other consciousness” of other national communities are felt throughout the nationalist consciousness. Without “Them”, so to speak, “Us” would not exist. A close regional proximity of national communities means that every conscious member of the national community experiences “their presence”—the presence of the “significant other”.<sup>66</sup>

National unity parallels and reinforces culture by espousing ideologies that acclaim general solidarity. By means of origin mythology and the common acceptance of national sacredness, threats to the nation, and, by extension, national culture, are identified and responded to in kind, as Stone notes:

The national collective also provides the basis for the nationalist interpretation of culture. National solidarity regards every member of the community as one. The idea of solidarity must be created in a way that promotes diversity without creating separation. Solidarities governed by rigidities can be dangerous in periods of change. Nevertheless, solidarity forms a central pillar in the whole nationalist rationale. It provides the nationalist's imagined community. It allows the nationalist to respond to a perceived external threat: the enemy without.<sup>67</sup>

The evolution of adversarial ideologies rooted in cultural contexts can only exacerbate conflict. Culture is then foreseen as yet another accoutrement of the nationalist consciousness, by which expansion of ideological pursuits can be carried out.

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<sup>66</sup> Stone 204.

<sup>67</sup> Stone 205.

Stone says, “The extremist, pathological or fascist nationalist seeks a higher (if not the highest) position for their culture in what the nationalist perceives to be a pecking order of world cultures.”<sup>68</sup> Extreme cultural expansionism, fueled by nationalist ideologies, can herald devastating outcomes. Again, Stone articulates these elements, “The exclusive nationalist narrative, such as that espoused by the Nazis, brutally attempts regional domination through an expansionist cultural discourse. Extremist nationalist consciousness has cultural aggrandizement among its highest objectives.”<sup>69</sup> Reference to extreme cases of Nationalism, such as Nazism, should not be discounted, as historical manifestations of extreme nationalist ideology are of great import to this project. The dichotomy of moderate and extreme Nationalism, however, must be determined to strengthen analytical rationalizations made in due course.

Stone investigates similarities and differences at length: “The difference between a moderate and an extremist nationalist consciousness is profound. Both reflect the life-affirming importance of territoriality, sacrifice, the national community, collective identity, an attitude of survival, a nationalist political identity, and a series of culturally exclusive, masculine regulating attitudes.”<sup>70</sup> Conversely, the disparity between restrained Nationalism and extreme Nationalism is significant. Stone first explores “moderate” Nationalism: “Moderate nationalist consciousness falls within the framework of a liberal discourse. It accommodates itself within the wider discourse of internationalism—

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<sup>68</sup> Stone 206.

<sup>69</sup> Stone 206.

<sup>70</sup> Stone 206.

centered around economic interdependence and transboundary interactions.”<sup>71</sup> Stone then demonstrates salient features that diverge from each other: “But the extremist nationalist consciousness rejects the internationalist discourse. It opposes interdependence, and offers a totally unfavorable evaluation of interdependent global processes. The nation not only comes first, but does so exclusively.”<sup>72</sup>

Insular notions of autonomy are key aspects of extreme Nationalism. Global concerns are mitigated in the nationalist discourse, for all things international are considered secondary to national aspirations. Stone comments, “The fracture between the extremist ideal objectification (of their country as the number one culture/race) and the quite different reality of the real world, is experienced as a thorough-going imperfection in all conscious life: it is a dejected consciousness. This estrangement from the self emerges as an estrangement, as well, from other cultures.”<sup>73</sup> The proliferation of repressive world-views facilitates an ideology that is fundamentally structured on isolation and severe perceptions of self. Stone says, “Extremist consciousness, alienated from itself and estranged from other cultures (the ‘Other’) ceases to have a reality for itself. Instead, extremist consciousness projects its essence and values into objects (in this case, the imagined nation/race) which it then pursues.”<sup>74</sup> Such ideological bents give meaning to isolationist stratagem, framing rationalizations of superordinate national identities that dismiss alternate systems. “The nationalist's life is seen as a means, whereas aggrandizing the nation/race is seen as the end. It is an imagined end, since the

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<sup>71</sup> Stone 206.

<sup>72</sup> Stone 206.

<sup>73</sup> Stone 206.

<sup>74</sup> Stone 206.

extremist consciousness, paradoxically, clashes with the world's inevitable interdependence. In this sense, extremist consciousness is alienated consciousness.”<sup>75</sup> The outcome of extreme nationalist ideology, according to Stone, is characterized by repressive world views obsessively concerned with securing national identity:

This “broken” consciousness is absorbed within a discourse of mental alienation and insecurity. Extremist nationalists are repressed, both internally and externally. They suffer an acute inner anguish. Externally, their repression of emerging interdependence arises from false notions of nationalistic masculinity. These derive from anti-intellectual values such as the perception of security as a national/racial “struggle”.<sup>76</sup>

In the mind of the extreme nationalist, the unerring pursuit of national identity, isolationism, and ethnic solidarity requires the full measure of sacrifice to Nation. That sacrifice is obligatory to the nationalist understanding of duty and participatory action. National currents of obligation and sacrifice work to reaffirm justification for heightened states of violence, as Anastasiou notes:

As a result of the extraordinary capacity of nationalism to “morally” legitimize force or violence in the name of the nation, nationalist-minded leaders and followers tend to develop high levels of tolerance for the use of lethal means in

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<sup>75</sup> Stone 207.

<sup>76</sup> Stone 207.

dealing with conflicts, particularly in confronting identifiable historical “enemies” of the nation. What is even more striking is that nationalists are inclined toward a high level of tolerance for the loss of human life not only among the enemy community but also among their own national community. As nationalism presumes the nation to be sacred, the taking and offering of human life to its service at critical moments in history is viewed not only as legitimate but as a “moral duty”. Hence, according to the nationalist mind, though momentarily inconvenient, the offering and taking of human life for the sake of the nation is ultimately neither a problematic nor a tragic phenomenon but one of “supreme duty” and altruistic “ultimate sacrifice”.<sup>77</sup>

The repercussions of such conceptualizations apply to both internal and external entities that do not fall within the nationalist understanding of tolerable existence. Those excluded from the national circle of acceptability face dire consequences indeed. Genocidal practices and ethnic cleansing distinguish the horrific end-result of extreme Nationalism. Anastasiou comments, “Conventional thinking assumes that ethnic cleansing has to do with cleansing a territory of people perceived by the perpetrators to be the ‘illegitimate other’. But, in the first order, ethnic cleansing has to do with a blood ritual by which the perpetrating ethno-national community purifies its collective self by ridding its society (and hence territory) of people it considers as ethno-national impurities living in its midst.”<sup>78</sup> Anastasiou’s earlier work synthesizes the terrible phenomenon and

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<sup>77</sup> Anastasiou (2008) 35.

<sup>78</sup> Anastasiou (2008) 35.

what he considers an inherent predisposition towards ethnic cleansing, securely fixed in extreme nationalist ideology:

It is precisely at this juncture in the nationalist mind that ethnic cleansing tacitly takes root and acquires moral import and justification; and that the lofty values of nationalism acquire the propensity of being transposed into activators of the most primitive human drives. Ethnic cleansing becomes a moral imperative for sustaining and preserving the purity, hence, authenticity of *the nation*, and of the society and state that embody it. Within the nationalist worldview, there are neither psychological sentiments nor sociological morphologies, nor cultural patterns that provide space for tolerating the symbiotic presence of other ethnic communities. In principal, the orientation toward ethnic cleansing is intrinsic to all nationalist movements and/or states. In all its forms, nationalism contains within itself a latent predisposition toward ethnic cleansing. What precise form of expression it assumes is circumstantial. It may range from assimilation to marginalization to domination. The outbreak of violent conflict simply brings this inherent tendency to its fullness as it finds recourse in acts of physical ethnic cleansing, whether spontaneous or planned.<sup>79</sup>

Investigating the complexities of extreme nationalist ideology has consistently presented major challenges throughout this project. The extraordinary spread of modern Nationalism has been carefully considered, by means of diligent attention to a variety of

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<sup>79</sup> Anastasiou (2006) 33-34.

scholarly sources, some of which differ significantly in their analyses. The presence of ideologies grounded in sovereign aspirations fuel nationalist understandings of global influence. Those understandings morph into unyielding ambitions of complete autonomy, which can potentially assist the furtherance of violent conflict. Ultimately, origin myths and constructed historical narratives advance the sacredness of Nation, ascribing ethnic superiority within national conceptualizations of identity. The prevalence of historical narratives and assumed ethnic identities work in tandem to empower “Us vs. Them” machinations, collectively demonizing the presence of outsiders. Moreover, the separation of moderate and extreme Nationalism was undertaken to reflect salient characteristics of extreme nationalist ideology and the potentiality of the most terrible outcome—the predisposition towards, and the fulfillment of, ethnic cleansing processes.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Literature Review of Right-Wing Extremist Groups**

A selective examination of historical, right-wing extremist groups in the U.S. is presented in order to understand what linkages are shared, or not shared, with modern U.S. Patriot Militia organizations. The historical context of these topics must be explored in relation to ideologies being adopted by modern Patriot Militias, to more clearly determine the extent to which nationalist consciousness is a primary motivation of the aforementioned groups, both historical and present.

### **Ideological Movements of Right-Wing Extremism**

Ideological elements of right-wing extremist groups in recent history represent an important aspect of this project, especially in consideration of preceding frameworks applicable to modern-era Patriot Militia organizations. To better understand a conceptual framework of right-wing, extremist ideology, this project emphasizes the principles and belief systems that have influenced historical movements of far-right extremism and resultant conflict. My research is focused specifically on three right-wing extremist organizations in the United States and the ideological foundations upon which those groups have formulated their movements.

Many elements contribute to the thought processes of extremist organizations in the U.S., including Nationalism, perceptions of relative deprivation, identity-based grievances, and more. For the purpose of exploring right-wing extremist mentalities in

this section, I have explicitly focused on supporting belief structures of the following three organizations: the Ku Klux Klan, Posse Comitatus, and Christian Identity movements. These groups are widely considered the most prominent, influential organizations in respect to historical, scholarly analysis of right-wing extremism, and have thus been the focus of my case-study research.

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) emerged in the Reconstruction Era following the American Civil War, espousing vehemently racist ideologies and violence against African Americans and other minority groups.<sup>80</sup> The intensity of violence directed at minorities was severe. Arie Perliger states, “The Tennessee Klan alone was involved in the early fall and summer of 1867 in 140 violent incidents; 25 of them ended with fatalities and 35 included extreme assaults. Many of the latter involved branding of their victims or mutilation with acid, flogging and physical beating.”<sup>81</sup> During that period, and in later decades, anger was also directed at white citizens who supported civil rights for minority groups who were ostensibly responsible for contributing to attacks on traditional American society and values. Perliger comments:

During the 1950s and 1960s most of the KKK chapters were involved in innumerable violent activities against African Americans and integration supporters, civil rights activists and Jews. These included murder, arson, and the

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<sup>80</sup> For a helpful historical survey, see, Arie Perliger. "Challengers from the Sidelines: Understanding America's Violent Far-Right | Combating Terrorism Center at West Point." *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point RSS*. N.p., Jan. 2013. Web. 12 Mar. 2013. 21.

<sup>81</sup> Perliger 41.

bombing of public facilities and Jewish and Catholic churches. The violence increased between 1956 and 1958, and again between 1963 and 1966, with hundreds of attacks per year and close to 50 complex annual operations, such as bombings and coordinated shooting attacks.<sup>82</sup>

Various sects of the KKK have formed and collapsed over the last 100 years, but certain philosophies of the KKK have directly influenced and permeated U.S. extremist groups in recent history, which is significant to the ongoing research.<sup>83</sup> Even in the 1920's, the supposed peak of KKK mobilization, racist aspirations had not shifted from earlier incarnations. Perliger states, "Nonetheless, despite the mass nature the KKK assumed in the late 1920s, it is still important to note that the Klan leadership and the overall organizational ideology remained loyal to its original ideas of internal homogeneity, nativism and traditional ethics, which were reflected by its white supremacist, racist, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic rhetoric."<sup>84</sup> The decline of KKK membership in recent decades is notable, but basic belief systems have largely remained the same, as discussed by Perliger, "Thus, the KKK today should be understood more as a collection of independent small groups which shares similar terminology, ideological tendencies and historical references, but lacks meaningful cooperation and coordination."<sup>85</sup> Current estimates of active KKK members in the

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<sup>82</sup> Perliger 47.

<sup>83</sup> Neil A. Hamilton. *Militias in America: A Reference Handbook*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, (1996): 17. Print.

<sup>84</sup> Perliger 22.

<sup>85</sup> Perliger 125.

United States range between 5,000 and 10,000 individuals.<sup>86</sup>

The import of this organization to my research cannot be underestimated, especially when one considers the violence carried out by the KKK under the guise of American Christian values. Subsequent extremist organizations were accordingly able to articulate complex theologies, grounded in the xenophobia of their predecessors, the KKK. Arie Perliger has authored the most current scholarly literature on U.S. right-wing extremist movements. His attention to established racist tendencies within the KKK and like-minded groups is as follows:

The racist movement is comprised of white supremacy groups such as the KKK, neo-Nazi groups such as the National Alliance and Skinheads groups such as the Hammerskin Nation. The groups comprising this movement are interested in preserving or restoring what they perceive as the appropriate and natural racial and cultural hierarchy, by enforcing social and political control over non-Aryans/nonwhites such as African Americans, Jews, and various immigrant communities. Therefore, their ideological foundations are based mainly on ideas of racism, segregation, xenophobia, and nativism (rejection of foreign norms and practices).<sup>87</sup>

The second case study provided, Posse Comitatus, can be historically traced to the John Birch Society (JBS), which originated in 1958. JBS philosophy was based on

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<sup>86</sup> Perliger 126.

<sup>87</sup> Perliger 4.

principles of anti-communism, but at the same time it exhibited racist tendencies by opposing civil rights movements, which were considered to be a communist plot.<sup>88</sup>

William Potter Gale was an important member of JBS but left the organization due to perceptions of inaction within the movement, forming Posse Comitatus (Strength of County).<sup>89</sup> Gale demanded a return of law to the county level of governance, providing frameworks such as “Volunteer Christian Posses” intended to monitor and act against corrupt government officials.<sup>90</sup> Although Posse Comitatus displayed complex anti-governmental ideologies, it is perhaps more relevant to understand perceptions of “Us vs. Them” thought processes, particularly regarding whom Posse Comitatus labeled as enemies.

As a charismatic leader, Gale was able to integrate less organized right-wing groups under the Posse Comitatus umbrella by conceptualizing and framing a distinct ideology that specifically targeted “America’s Enemy”.<sup>91</sup> Gale, and followers of Posse Comitatus, promoted a belief that a Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG) was controlling U.S. governmental systems, additionally contending that all individuals and groups of Jewish origin were enemies of the highest order.<sup>92</sup>

Blee and Creasap, notable scholars of ZOG belief systems, recently discussed the ideologies of racist right-wing movements in the United States, describing the widespread

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<sup>88</sup> Paul D. Brister, and Nina A. Kollars. "Pass Em' Right: Assessing the Threat of WMD Terrorism from America's Christian Patriots." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5.2 (2011): 2. Print.

<sup>89</sup> Brister and Kollars 2.

<sup>90</sup> Brister and Kollars 3.

<sup>91</sup> Brister and Kollars 2.

<sup>92</sup> Brister and Kollars 4.

beliefs of Judaic influence on all levels of American society, including politics, media, and civil rights. They comment: “The nationalism of right-wing movements also is tempered by their antagonism to the U.S. government, which they describe as a Zionist Occupation Government that works on behalf of Jewish overlords to take away the rights and guns of white, Aryan citizens.”<sup>93</sup> The fierce anti-Semitism of Posse Comitatus was especially evident in their rhetoric, but also in violent actions perpetrated by splinter groups (The Order, Aryan Nations) and members of the organization itself.<sup>94</sup> Consider the following statement by Gale: “Yes, we are going to cleanse our land. We’re going to do it with a sword. And we’re going to do it with violence...it’s about time somebody is telling you to get violent, whitey.”<sup>95</sup>

The violent discourse of Posse Comitatus was additionally fueled by New World Order (NWO) ideology. The NWO, as perceived by Posse Comitatus, was essentially an enlargement of ZOG ideology, embracing conspiratorial perceptions of vast global influence and interference by Jews. Many of the same beliefs coincide with the next movement presented, the Christian Identity movement.

As an aside, current NWO ideology parallels some aspects of ZOG ideology, sometimes theorizing that Judaic power structures control global mechanisms. Conversely, individuals who adhere to modern NWO thought processes, even if they do not exhibit anti-Semitic views, do consider that a global conspiracy is presently underway, which will eventually result in an invasion of the United States. Van Dyke

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<sup>93</sup> Kathleen M. Blee, and Kimberly A. Creasap. "Conservative and Right-Wing Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36.1 (2010): 275. Print.

<sup>94</sup> Brister and Kollars 4.

<sup>95</sup> Brister and Kollars 4.

and Soule comment: "Many patriot/militia members believe that the 'New World Order' is behind a United Nations plan to invade the U.S., overthrow the government, disarm the citizens, and install a dictatorship."<sup>96</sup>

The term "Christian Identity" corresponds to "Identity Christianity". Both terms represent the same organization and can be used interchangeably. Neil Hamilton describes the movement, the theology of "British Israelism", and one of its key founders, Wesley Swift, in the following:

A religious group whose doctrine portrayed Jews as the devil's children, engaged in a conspiracy to take over the world. In the 1980's several small Identity churches emerged similar to Swift's own Church of Jesus Christ Christian, claiming they 'identified' (hence the name) with the Ten Lost Tribes that had been conquered in 722 B.C. and dispersed from Israel. According to Identity belief, these tribes had journeyed during an ancient period to England, where they had developed a superior culture, one divinely inspired, and one that made Americans, at least those descended from British civilization, the chosen people of God.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> 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* 49.4 (2002): 502. Print.

<sup>97</sup> Neil A. Hamilton. *Militias in America: A Reference Handbook*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, (1996): 20. Print.

The theory originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, defined by the writings of a Scotsman in 1840, which claimed true Israelites were Anglo-Saxons.<sup>98</sup> The ideology slowly developed among small groups in the U.S. during the 1930's and 1940's, but gained more significant momentum during the 1960's.<sup>99</sup> Christian Identity theology was also a key component of Posse Comitatus, widely spread by William Potter Gale of PC and Richard Butler of the Aryan Nations.<sup>100</sup> Perliger operationally defines the fundamentalist inclinations of current Christian Identity movements,

The fundamentalist stream, which includes mainly Christian Identity groups such as the Aryan Nations, fuse religious fundamentalism with traditional white supremacy and racial tendencies, thus promoting ideas of nativism, exclusionism, and racial superiority through a unique interpretation of religious texts that focuses on division of humanity according to primordial attributes.<sup>101</sup>

Yet another piece of Christian Identity theology is the utilization of creation narratives. Extreme racism is reinforced by a belief that "Whites" are directly descended from the Adam and Eve of biblical tradition, but "non-Whites" are the result of an evolutionary process, specifically descended from a species of lower origins. Moreover, Jews are believed to be the result of an illicit union between Eve and Satan, which

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<sup>98</sup> Tanya T. Sharpe. "The Identity Christian Movement: Ideology Of Domestic Terrorism." *Journal of Black Studies* 30.4 (2000): 606. Print.

<sup>99</sup> Stanley C. Weeber, and Daniel Gilbert Rodeheaver. *Militias in the New Millennium: A Test of Smelser's Theory of Collective Behavior*. Lanham, MD: University of America, (2004): 183. Print.

<sup>100</sup> Perliger 75.

<sup>101</sup> Perliger 4.

subsequently produced Cain, who is identified as the first ancestor of the Jewish race.<sup>102</sup>

As dubious and historically absurd as these beliefs appear, they continue to be an essential aspect of the Christian Identity narrative.

The exploitation of biblical texts to promulgate racial and other ideological notions is a common practice in the ideological construction of the Identity movement. Another example is the Identity movement's interpretation of God's revelations to Abraham and his sons of the transformation of Israel into a dominant, flourishing and powerful nation as an indication of the destiny of the Aryan people.<sup>103</sup>

The Christian Identity movement bolsters the legitimization of violence by encouraging millennial ideologies. This entails a literal translation of the biblical Armageddon narrative and the prediction of violent race wars, which will eventually result in an Aryan triumph over "lesser" races.<sup>104</sup> Project Megiddo, an FBI report produced in 1999, also recognized that most Christian Identity militia groups display a millennial mentality, a belief that Americans are presently being faced with End of Days scenarios. Sharpe comments:

Christian Identity also believes in the inevitability of the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ. It is believed that these events are part of a cleansing

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<sup>102</sup> Sharpe 610.

<sup>103</sup> Perliger 35.

<sup>104</sup> Sharpe 607.

process that is needed before Christ's kingdom can be established on earth. During this time, Jews and their allies will attempt to destroy the white race using any means available. The result will be a violent and bloody struggle—a war, in effect—between God's forces, the white race, and the forces of evil, the Jews and nonwhites.<sup>105</sup>

In addition to anti-governmental narratives, much the same as Posse Comitatus, Christian Identity beliefs mirror white supremacy as an introductory aspect of its theology. Undeniably, all three of the groups investigated believe in the supremacy of the “White” race. The Christian Identity Movement, however, utilizes an arbitrary creation narrative to augment its dominance as a human species, and to legitimate righteous violence against “non-Whites” and Jews. The espoused ideologies are grounded in a complex web of interpretative biblical theology that is disseminated to followers and like-minded White Supremacist groups.<sup>106</sup> Approximate membership of current Christian Identity groups in the U.S. is estimated between 25,000 and 50,000 individuals.<sup>107</sup>

### **U.S. Patriot Militia Operationalized**

An operational definition of “Patriot Militia” will be developed during this section but, for the present, Van Dyke and Soule present a working statement on the classification of U.S. Patriot Militias:

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<sup>105</sup> "CESNUR - *CESNUR - Full Text of the FBI Report "Project Megiddo"* (1999): 1. Web. 08 Dec. 2012.

<sup>106</sup> Sharpe 613.

<sup>107</sup> Perliger 139.

The *Patriot* movement involves individuals who identify themselves as patriots opposed to a “New World Order” government conspiracy. The common theme articulated by the groups we define as belonging to this movement, is the idea that the U.S. government has failed to uphold and protect the Constitution, and that citizen action is necessary for its protection. *Militia* group members are patriots who have formed armed units.<sup>108</sup>

The definition presented has merit, but I will endeavor to provide a more complete overview of the movement by reviewing historical origins, rationale for past and current mobilization, and basic principles championed by militia members. By exploring such characteristics the phenomenon can be critically analyzed, thereby revealing correlative features of Nationalism and nationalist ideology in future sections of this project. To begin, The Declaration of Independence, of which an excerpt is provided below, continues to be the rallying call for militia groups in America:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. - That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, - That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and

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<sup>108</sup> Van Dyke and Soule 497.

to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.<sup>109</sup>

Published by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, the Declaration represents the founding of American national identity.<sup>110</sup> Although the scope of this project does not allow a detailed historiography of the American Revolution, the war fought between thirteen British American colonies and the British Empire symbolizes a heroic, revolutionary struggle against the threat of external, tyrannical rulers, and is without failure memorialized in modern militia movements. The ability of early Americans to survive difficult sea journeys and to endure harsh settlement conditions, reinforces idealized perceptions of early American independence. But national struggle against an occupying force, the refusal to accept imposed taxation policies, guerilla

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<sup>109</sup> "Declaration of Independence - Text Transcript." *National Archives and Records Administration*. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Aug. 2013.

<sup>110</sup> Eric Sauer. *Imagining the Impossible: Insurgency in the U.S.A.* Diss. Naval Postgraduate School, 2011. Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, (2011): 8. Print.

warfare strategies utilized by those early militias, and the formative documents of America written during and after the American Revolution remain the fundamental themes of today's Patriot Militias. Perliger comments:

Many of the militias also legitimize their ideological tendencies by referring to the strong role of civilian activism, civilian paramilitary groups, individual freedoms, and self-governing and frontier culture in America's history and ethos, especially during the Revolutionary War and the expansion to the West. Hence, members of these groups see themselves as the successors of the nation's founding fathers, and as part of a struggle to restore or preserve what they regard as America's true identity, values and way of life.<sup>111</sup>

Indeed, the American Revolution is a source of national pride for many Americans and this project does not intend to dismiss the memorialization of national history. The reliance on historical events as interpreted by Patriot Militias should, however, be subject to inquiry. This is especially evident in the remembrance of colonial militias, observed by many Americans as heroic figures, but at the same time deemed incongruent with modern U.S. military structure. Regardless, the movement vehemently demands the enlargement of organized militia units, citing an array of rationalizations for modern militia formation. Perliger condenses the contentious nature of disparate societal perceptions in regards to modern militias:

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<sup>111</sup> Perliger 30-31.

For many years the “militia” concept had enduring and positive roots in the American collective mindset. This was a reflection of the significant role played by civilian paramilitary groups in the American violent struggle for independence, and later in providing security at times of territorial expansion. However, whereas Americans continue to remember and admire the role of militias in the Revolutionary War, i.e., the Minutemen in the battles of Lexington and Concord, growing numbers of scholars, policy makers and practitioners express concern at the modern manifestations of American militias and the threat they represent.<sup>112</sup>

As previously discussed, the earliest expression of U.S. extremist militias is widely considered to be the KKK. More important to this project are recent linkages between the explosive rise of militias in the 1990’s, the foremost catalysts for group mobilization in that period, the subsequent decline of those militias, and the current resurgence of militias in America. Correlative features of modern Patriot Militias, gleaned from 1990’s era movements, must be investigated in order to understand the evolution of right-wing militia movements in 2013.

In the 1980’s, splinter groups with origins in the Posse Comitatus movement commenced a sequence of violent attacks and bank robberies across America that quickly drew the attention of the U.S. Federal Government.<sup>113</sup> FBI intervention was swift, resulting in raids on militia compounds that revealed large stockpiles of weapons,

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<sup>112</sup> Perliger 64.

<sup>113</sup> Brister and Kollars 4-5.

additionally exposing detailed plans for intended bombings of Federal buildings.<sup>114</sup>

Understandably, the increasing scrutiny leveled at U.S. militia movements caused many groups to become more reclusive, and membership declined. Even Posse Comitatus tried to shift tactics by using a new organizational label, Christian Patriots, to assuage critics and increase recruiting.<sup>115</sup>

Racist ideologies were veiled in favor of anti-governmental rhetoric, and the group propagated economic conspiracy theories to retain members of the movement.<sup>116</sup> The Farm Crisis of the 1980's was highly significant to the spread of anti-governmental sentiment and negative perceptions of globalization. Eric Sauer comments on the effects of globalization in the 1980's and 1990's, and the impact of the farm crisis in rural America:

The current period of economic globalization began with the close of the Second World War and the establishment of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization and the U.S. dollar as the international reserve currency. Politicians have made numerous arguments about the benefits of globalization, but often have failed to mention how much pain this would cause for some. The 1980s U.S. farm crisis signaled such pain.<sup>117</sup>

Heavily indebted farmers across America were caught unawares by the 1980's

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<sup>114</sup> Brister and Kollars 5.

<sup>115</sup> Brister and Kollars 5.

<sup>116</sup> Brister and Kollars 5.

<sup>117</sup> Sauer 16.

economic shift. Paired with the transfer of local farming markets to global corporate interests, American farmers experienced sharp declines in profits and, for many, total economic ruin.<sup>118</sup> Joel Dyer describes the circumstances faced by farmers, “A destructive combination of high interest rates dictated by the Federal Reserve, low prices for farm products due to the multinational food monopolies’ control of the market, and new, smaller government subsidies that caught farmers by surprise in 1985 had sealed their fate.”<sup>119</sup> Accordingly, extremist organizations strategically manipulated the experiences of American farmers to advance their cause. Sauer states:

Organizations such as the John Birch society, Posse Comitatus, Sovereign Citizen, and Christian Identity made their presence noticed at farm foreclosures and rallies. Eager to promote their organizations’ explanation for the farmer’s misfortune, these anti-government groups tailored their message to downplay racial hatred. Instead, they focused on their common enemy: the federal government and impending government repression.<sup>120</sup>

Nevertheless, large-scale mobilization of U.S. militias was limited during the 1980’s and early 1990’s. Even organizational name changes and shifting discourses did little to disguise racial undertones of groups like PC.<sup>121</sup> Many appreciated the anti-governmental discourse, but little proof corroborated radical claims of looming

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<sup>118</sup> Sauer 16.

<sup>119</sup> Joel Dyer, *Harvest of Rage: Why Oklahoma City is Only the Beginning*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press (1998): 2. Print.

<sup>120</sup> Sauer 17.

<sup>121</sup> Brister and Kollars 5.

government takeovers. All that changed in the early nineties, brought to fruition by two events with disastrous repercussions: the incidents at Ruby Ridge and Waco.<sup>122</sup>

Randy Weaver, an Army veteran with links to the Christian Identity movement, failed to appear in court for the sale of illegal weapons. U.S. Marshalls began surveillance on the Weaver's home, a remote cabin in Ruby Ridge, Idaho where Weaver lived with his wife and four children.<sup>123</sup> The details are still unclear, but a violent standoff ensued between Weaver and Federal agents after Sam Weaver, age 14, was shot and killed by an agent in the process of investigating an alarm raised by the family dog. The best accounts contend that Sam witnessed the dog shot by agents and opened return fire in defense of the dog, subsequently wounding an agent who eventually died. Sam Weaver was immediately shot and killed by an agent as he fled. The standoff between Federal agents and the Weaver family also resulted in the death of Randy Weaver's wife, who was killed by a sniper, before negotiators were able to facilitate a peaceful surrender.<sup>124</sup>

The acknowledged mishandling of the incident by Federal law enforcement began a recruiting boon for anti-government groups around the country, resulting in a large gathering of right-wing organizations in Estes Park, Colorado, the largest planned event of such groups in recent history. The event reaffirmed solidarity against the U.S.

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<sup>122</sup> Brister and Kollars 5.

<sup>123</sup> Brister and Kollars 5.

<sup>124</sup> Brister and Kollars 5.

government, utilizing the recently confirmed narrative of Federal violence against innocent American citizens to mobilize extremist ideology.<sup>125</sup>

In the spring of 1993, just months after the Estes Park rendezvous, the ATF led a weapons-raid on the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas.<sup>126</sup> The small religious group was a spin-off sect of the Seventh Day Adventist Church that adopted strong millennial narratives and prepared for defensive struggles against imminent attacks in a post-apocalyptic society.<sup>127</sup> Preceding the weapons-raid, Branch Davidians were tipped off by an unknowing reporter, and responded in turn when the predicted raid occurred.<sup>128</sup> The fierce standoff lasted fifty-one days, an event that was well publicized by national media and demonstrated yet another clash between Federal agents and members of a fringe group.<sup>129</sup> The conflict ended violently on April 19, 1993, as Federal agents breached the compound with tanks, armored vehicles, and gas canisters.<sup>130</sup> A fire broke out engulfing large sections of the compound, claiming the lives of more than seventy Branch Davidians.<sup>131 132</sup> The death toll included twenty children, a horrific outcome that solidified anti-government sentiment in the minds of many militia supporters, further evidenced by the events in Oklahoma City precisely two years later.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Brister and Kollars 5.

<sup>126</sup> Brister and Kollars 6.

<sup>127</sup> Hamilton 26.

<sup>128</sup> Hamilton 26.

<sup>129</sup> Weeber and Rodeheaver 186.

<sup>130</sup> Hamilton 27.

<sup>131</sup> Brister and Kollars 6.

<sup>132</sup> Weeber and Rodeheaver 186.

<sup>133</sup> Brister and Kollars 6.

The final contributor of militia mobilization, according to some, was the passing of the Brady Bill in 1993, a law passed to stem handgun violence in America.<sup>134</sup> The ensuing restrictions on firearm purchases reinforced perceptions of government interference and diminishing individual rights. For militia members, the freedom to bear arms represents *the most fundamental right* of American citizens. Norton comments:

Militia followers offer the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution as the authorizing source for the existence of their movement. The movement has articulated its foremost concern as what it perceives as a government conspiracy to disarm “law-abiding” citizens. In addition, many in the movement suggest that disarming all American citizens is only the first step in a secret government plot to relinquish the nation’s sovereignty to a “One World Government”.<sup>135</sup>

The culmination of the previous happenings, manifested by the deadliest domestic terrorist incident in U.S history, occurred in Oklahoma City two years after the Waco compound raid.<sup>136</sup> Timothy McVeigh carried out the bombing of the Murrah Federal building on April 19, 1995, an attack that claimed the lives of 168 persons, 19 of whom were children.<sup>137</sup> McVeigh’s association with right-wing extremist groups and correlative ideologies sent shockwaves through both the militia movements and the general public. Increased law enforcement and public indignation would effectively

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<sup>134</sup> Heather M. Norton. "Patriots or Paranoids? The Creation of a Public Identity for the Modern Militia Movement." Diss. The Pennsylvania State University, (2005): 4. Print.

<sup>135</sup> Norton 2-3.

<sup>136</sup> Brister and Kollars 6.

<sup>137</sup> Brister and Kollars 6.

splinter the militia movements following the attack. Brister and Kollars discuss the aftermath:

As law enforcement agencies began to focus attention on right wing extremist groups, many went to ground—severing communications, tempering rhetoric, and attempting to distance themselves from any association with the McVeigh attack. The once unified movement had atomized to become different strands of constantly bickering individual organizations.<sup>138</sup>

The 1990's militia movements slowly faded in the wake of Oklahoma City, predominately attributed to the Federal Government's acknowledgement of mishandling the Ruby Ridge and Waco incidents, lack of public support for groups that advocated violence against the government, and the complete absence of predicted millennial events.<sup>139</sup> The continued academic study of anti-government groups in the U.S. is most certainly a result of militia mobilization in the 1990's, which revealed various typologies that better define current groups associated with modern Patriot Militias. Heather Norton's work in 2005 synthesized the assorted strains of Patriot Militias in the U.S. and corresponding scholarly literature, compiling a dynamic typology that is still relevant today.

Norton cites Timothy Seul's operationalization of U.S. militias, delineating the similarities and differences of specific patriot movements. Seul's typology identified

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<sup>138</sup> Brister and Kollars 6.

<sup>139</sup> Sauer 18.

thought processes and behaviors applicable to “Patriotic Liberals” and “Patriotic Reconstructionists”.<sup>140</sup> Norton posits, “A Patriotic Liberal is a grassroots activist who believes in vigilant observation and reform of the government, but is not an extremist. A Patriotic Reconstructionist, on the other hand, believes in conspiracies, sees no evidence of the America that he or she once loved, and finds nothing about the nation worth reforming.”<sup>141</sup> Norton presents additional classifications of U.S. militias, gleaned from scholars Rebecca Katz and Joey Bailey. The characterizations put forth catalog “Hate Militias” and “Constitutional Militias”.<sup>142</sup> A “Hate Militia” is most similar to movements detailed previously—the KKK, Christian Identity, and Posse Comitatus. The principal reasoning for mobilization is grounded in xenophobic, sexist ideology that is plainly discernable within anti-governmental rhetoric. The exclusion of racist discourse and a concentration on perceived governmental neglect or exploitation, however, is fundamental to the grouping label of “Constitutional Militias”.<sup>143</sup>

Finally, Norton discusses the work of Joe Bellon, who recommends three categories of militias, defined as “Warrior Militias”, “Racial Militias”, and “Public Militias”.<sup>144</sup> As the moniker would suggest, Bellon considers “Warrior Militias” the most bellicose, their ideologies dependent on warlike mobilization against foreign or domestic adversaries.<sup>145</sup> Explanations of militaristic ideologies in “Warrior Militias” are not specific, some groups relying on anti-governmental perceptions, while others espouse

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<sup>140</sup> Norton 11.

<sup>141</sup> Norton 11.

<sup>142</sup> Norton 11.

<sup>143</sup> Norton 11.

<sup>144</sup> Norton 11-12.

<sup>145</sup> Norton 11.

virulent racism as the reason for paramilitary activities. “Racial Militias”, according to Bellon, utilize religious interpretation to justify white supremacist convictions.<sup>146</sup> The Christian Identity organization is an archetypal case study of the “Racial Militia” category. Groups classified as “Public Militias” by Bellon are less aggressive, likened by Norton to the “Patriotic Liberals” and “Constitutional Militias”.<sup>147</sup>

Similar to earlier case studies of right-wing extremist organization, the typologies presented are not definitive, evidenced by categorized militias often sharing similar characteristics and ideologies. Norton recognizes the wide gamut of U.S. militias and the available scholarship: “All of these scholars recognize that individual militias exist on a continuum and range from those that pose little threat to those that are genuinely dangerous. They seem to agree that the most virulent militias are formed when anti-government sentiment is fused with firearms, racism, and wild conspiracy theories.”<sup>148</sup>

In closing this section, the operational definition of Patriot Militia utilized in this project depends heavily on Perliger’s analysis of anti-federalist movements in America. Perliger aptly asserts: “The anti-federalist movement’s ideology is based on the idea that there is an urgent need to undermine the influence, legitimacy and practical sovereignty of the federal government and its proxy organizations.”<sup>149</sup> Current movements of anti-federalist militias, operationally congruent with this project’s understanding of modern Patriot Militias, rely on numerous principles that legitimize rigid positions.

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<sup>146</sup> Norton 12.

<sup>147</sup> Norton 12.

<sup>148</sup> Norton 12.

<sup>149</sup> Perliger 28.

One such position is the recurrent belief in the coming implementation of a New World Order. The inescapability of globalization has facilitated the NWO conspiracy, cementing anti-federalist perceptions within Patriot Militia groups. Attention to NWO ideology is specifically directed at the U.S. Federal Government, which is believed to have been corrupted by a malevolent international system. Perliger is clear on this aspect of anti-federalist positioning: “Some groups are driven by a strong conviction that the American political system and its proxies were hijacked by external forces interested in promoting a ‘New World Order’ (NWO), in which the United States will be embedded in the UN or another version of global government.”<sup>150</sup> The fulfillment of such a system is measured in stages by militias, “The NWO will be advanced, they believe, via steady transition of powers from local to federal law-enforcement agencies, i.e., the transformation of local police and law enforcement agencies into a federally controlled ‘National Police’ agency that will in turn merge with a ‘Multi-National Peace Keeping Force’.”<sup>151</sup> The final outcome of the NWO is thought to involve the incursion of foreign legislators and troops on U.S. soil who will further oppress American society, in time replacing the U.S. government with an international monitoring system.<sup>152</sup> In such a scenario, American citizens would experience violent repression, culminating in the total loss of fundamental rights including the principles of, “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of

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<sup>150</sup> Perliger 28.

<sup>151</sup> Perliger 28.

<sup>152</sup> Perliger 28.

Happiness”.<sup>153</sup> Perliger relays such sentiment by presenting statements delivered by a leading figure of the Unorganized Militia of the United States:

This is the coming of the New World Order. A one-world government, where, in order to put the new government in place, we must all be disarmed first. To do that, the government is deliberately creating schisms in our society, funding both the anti-abortion/pro-choice sides, the antigun/pro-gun issues...trying to provoke a riot that will allow martial law to be implemented and all weapons seized, while ‘dissidents’ are put safely away.<sup>154</sup>

To further legitimize positions, Patriot Militias cite government infringement on constitutional rights, an observation that reinforces perceptions of a tyrannical U.S. Federal Government. Common themes surrounding constitutionalist ideologies are often based on gun control legislation and the perception of government intrusion, but increasing focus is being placed on environmental, immigration, and education policy.<sup>155</sup> When lawmakers introduce policies that are interpreted as unconstitutional by Patriot Militias, the anti-federalist discourse escalates. Perliger notes the importance of militia narratives concerning constitutional rights:

The opposition to gun control legislation has been driven mainly by the perception of many that this represents a breach of the Second Amendment and a

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<sup>153</sup> Declaration of Independence 1.

<sup>154</sup> Perliger 29.

<sup>155</sup> Perliger 30.

direct violation of a constitutional right, having direct impact on the ability of many to preserve their common practices and way of life. In contrast, the opposition to environmental legislation has been driven by the economic consequences of this legislation, as perceived by the militia members, in particular the decline of industries which are not environmentally friendly but crucial for the economy in rural areas.<sup>156</sup>

This project is concerned with the phenomenon of Nationalism and how it contributes to the reemergence of anti-federalist, Patriot Militias in the post-1990's era. Entwined in the discourse of Nationalism, however, are salient characteristics that contribute to the growth of modern militia movements. Perliger's work again provides the most concise synthesis of those factors, although many other scholars detail similar conceptualizations:

It is evident that the economic boom of the late 1990s, which was followed by the passage to 2000 without any catastrophe and the election of a conservative president, led to a dramatic decrease in the credibility of the movement and its leaders. The militia members who expected a watershed event that would substantiate their ideological foundations instead witnessed a rise in the standard of living and the election of a president identifying with small government, and strong and independent local authorities. For many militia members, America was on the right track; thus, the incentive to prepare for war against NWO forces

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<sup>156</sup> Perliger 30.

evaporated. This is almost exactly the opposite of the developments which occurred in 2008—the election of a Democratic president with a liberal background; the economic recession; and the introduction of policies and reforms threatening the independence of local political authorities—which have led to what some claim is the revival of the militia movement.<sup>157</sup>

The conditions that have facilitated a noticeable rise in U.S. militia organizations are debatable. Those conditions, while entirely applicable to the study of Patriot Militia groups, are not the key focus of this project. Conversely, the operationalization of Patriot Militias offered in this section was needed for research analysis. In summary, the operationalization has thus endeavored to trace chronological beginnings of U.S. militia movements, scholarly reasoning for past militia mobilization, and primary ideologies espoused by current and historical militia organizations. The amalgamation of those elements works in tandem to uncover key aspects essential for analytical review. To that purpose, the intersection of nationalist ideology and Patriot Militia organization will be presented in the next chapter.

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<sup>157</sup> Perliger 70-71.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Literature Analysis**

The literature analysis in this project examines comparative trends of Patriot Militia ideology and Nationalism, gleaned from the extensive literature research demonstrated in earlier sections. Exclusionary aspects of nationalist ideology, the quest for sovereignty and complete autonomy within nationalist movements, nationalist perceptions of Nation sacredness, and salient characteristics of ethnic superiority myths associated with extreme Nationalism are applied to the case-study research of modern Patriot Militias. Additional features of Nationalism—reliance on constructed historiography and national mythology—will be detailed in the analysis section dedicated to conflict theory.

Historical movements of extremist groups in the U.S. personify the exclusionary nature of radical Nationalism. Although many scholars have considered those commonalities, the evolution of right-wing extremism and nationalist sentiment is still imperative to further research, especially as they pertain to the reemergence of militia organizations in the United States. A brief review clarifies the importance of nationalist ideology and previous movements of right-wing extremism.

The prior case studies of Posse Comitatus, Christian Identity, and the KKK clearly correlate to theoretical frameworks of extreme nationalist ideology. Indeed, Perlinger notes the dominance of Nationalism within such groups, “If there is one

ideological doctrine about which there is almost full consensus regarding its importance for understanding the far-right worldview, it is that of nationalism.”<sup>158</sup> The application of nationalist theory to right-wing extremism is two-fold, substantiated by far-right perceptions of “internal homogenization” and “external exclusiveness”.<sup>159</sup> That form of homogenization essentially seeks to achieve an environment consisting of cultural and ethnic sameness. Nation is the setting; it becomes the fortress in which idealized perceptions of “internal homogenization” are cultivated and protected.

Regardless of actual political and social realities, extremist aspirations continue to dwell on ethnic and cultural perceptions that reject outside persons and cultures. Perliger’s analysis of Nationalism and the extreme far-right contends that “internal homogenization” involves “the aspiration that all residents or citizens of the polity will share the same national origin and ethnic characteristics.”<sup>160</sup> Additionally, a framework of “external exclusiveness” serves insular goals by attempting to assemble citizenry under the perceived security of the nation. Perliger defines it as, “The aspiration that all individuals belonging to a specific national or ethnic group will reside in the homeland.”<sup>161</sup>

Undoubtedly, the KKK, Posse Comitatus, and Christian Identity movements aspire to such forms of rigid internal categorizations. Selective membership in those groups is contingent upon ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural distinctiveness. Perliger further relates the concept of “nativism” to such far-right ambitions, theorizing the

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<sup>158</sup> Perliger 15.

<sup>159</sup> Perliger 15.

<sup>160</sup> Perliger 15.

<sup>161</sup> Perliger 15.

importance of inflexible national identity structures to extreme right-wing groups.<sup>162</sup>

Nativism parallels the pursuit of internal sameness, refusing persons or traditions considered alien to the native environment. More importantly, however, are ideological traits centered on an exclusionary discourse. A discourse of exclusion consequently reinforces aspirations of national homogeneity.

Extreme nationalist ideology, much the same as Perliger's application of nativism, rejects the presence of internal or external foreign influence. The ethno-nationalist approach of previous militia groups in the U.S. has certainly subsisted on exclusionary conceptualizations of "the other". Discrimination towards minorities or groups with dissimilar political and religious affiliations was inexorably part of early far-right discourse. Although the intense racism of past extremist groups was not evident in the literature dedicated to modern Patriot Militias, anti-federalist rationale was indeed considered foundational to organizational processes. Anti-federalism strengthens perceptions of "Us vs. Them" by assigning responsibility for infringements on individual constitutional rights to the U.S. Federal Government. Policies and legislation that do not coincide with perceptions of acceptable national norms are met with antagonism, and are facilitated by narratives of government corruption and foreign interference.

For example, the frequency of NWO conspiracies recounted by Patriot Militias demonstrates extreme nationalist understandings of global and domestic politics. According to the literature, many Patriot Militias develop viewpoints contingent upon the sullied nature of the U.S. Government by attributing the perceived degradation of

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<sup>162</sup> Perliger 16.

American society to outside entities—the United Nations being a common reference. As a result, the threat of internal corruption and foreign meddling satisfies the legitimization of nationalist ambitions. The anti-federalist discourse melds with extreme nationalist ideology by identifying internal and external threats to the nation.

Recall that nationalist ideology places great emphasis on national autonomy. The exclusivist nature of extreme Nationalism fails to recognize the legitimacy of international systems, whether those systems are political, legislative, or cultural. Movements of right-wing extremism have historically embraced isolationist stratagem, which reinforce limited, but firm, perspectives of national autonomy. Modern Patriot Militias share unyielding perceptions of national autonomy, which are exemplified by consistent security measures recommended against international bodies. Yet again, the NWO conspiracies correspond to defensive traits of nationalist ideology, supported by perceptions of impending attacks on national independence. When domestic authorities are assumed to be in collusion with international establishments, the Patriot Militias seem to increase anti-government rhetoric, subsequently hardening positions against internal and external institutions.

Rhetoric aside, has nationalist ideology facilitated acts of violence against the U.S. Government? To be clear, current levels of violence have not nearly approached the historical record of far-right aggression. The literature cites numerous acts of violence perpetrated by the KKK, in addition to arbitrary violence carried out by Posse Comitatus and Christian Identity groups. The case could even be argued that 1990's militia groups were indirectly responsible for high levels of violence, if one were to include to the

Oklahoma City bombing in the analysis. Modern Patriot Militias, however, have not produced the systematic acts of violence exhibited by the KKK, nor have they been party to large-scale terrorist attacks. Although the literature reveals attempts to destroy governmental buildings or personnel, post-1990's militia groups have been largely unsuccessful, the majority of those plots being successfully thwarted by Federal and local law enforcement.<sup>163</sup>

Most scholars conclude that only limited acts of violence have been perpetrated by modern Patriot Militias, but recognize the potential for mass-attacks, especially in consideration of the Oklahoma City bombing. The culmination of 1990's era militia mobilization—the Oklahoma City attack—represents just such an inclination towards large-scale assaults. When Perliger includes the Oklahoma City bombing in his dataset, the results are significant:

To begin with, almost 15% of the Militias' attacks caused, or were intended to cause, mass casualties. This is the highest proportion among all components of the American far right. Second, the average number of fatalities and injuries is considerably higher than that found among the groups comprising the racist movement (14.04 injured and 3.97 fatalities); when omitting the attack in Oklahoma, the average goes down considerably (0.77 and 0.55 respectively). Nonetheless, the average is still higher than what we find in some of the other

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<sup>163</sup> For a complete timeline of isolated attacks on law enforcement officers and plots against governmental buildings see, "Southern Poverty Law Center." *Terror From the Right: Plots, Conspiracies and Racist Rampages Since Oklahoma City*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Aug. 2013.

movements. Thus, it may be concluded that while the number of attacks produced by the Militias is still not necessarily on the rise, the destructive potential of their attacks is relatively high.<sup>164</sup>

Perliger's study tracks far-right militia violence from 1990-2011, which does not provide ample evidence of modern Patriot Militia violence. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the potential for mass-violence posed by modern Patriot Militias. The worst attacks in the 1990's were carried out by specific individuals, not organized militia groups; a significant finding that suggests future attacks could follow the same trend. Nevertheless, this project has found no conclusive evidence to substantiate claims of imminent mass-violence, whether perpetrated by groups or individuals. Rather, the literature does indeed confirm nationalist ideologies espoused by modern Patriot Militias, which provides some theoretical indications of latent potentials for violence.

In addition to nationalist conceptualizations of exclusivity and autonomy, Patriot Militias attribute an intense sacredness of Nation to the United States. The veneration of national identity is undeniably part of the Patriot Militia discourse. More detailed analysis is presented in the next section, but it must be noted now that modern militias consider defense of the Nation a sacred duty. The alleged misuse of the American Constitution and other founding principles legitimates anti-governmental and anti-internationalist discourse, generally implying a future course of action that will require

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<sup>164</sup> Perliger 138.

the ultimate sacrifice. Definitively, that sacrifice entails the giving of one's life for the Nation, in order to prevent the perceived corruption and collapse of American society. If the current system continues along the same course, the rationale contends that normative values of American culture can only be salvaged through such sacrifice.

Has the sacredness of Nation concept morphed into a structured discourse of ethnic superiority, and are undertones of ethnic cleansing rhetoric apparent in modern Patriot Militias? The anti-internationalist outlook is comparable to ethnic superiority narratives found in previous far-right movements, but no conclusive evidence was found in the literature to suggest ethnic cleansing as a primary objective. A prominent difference between Patriot Militias and the KKK, Posse Comitatus, or Christian Identity groups is the removal of ethnic cleansing aspirations from regular discourse. Even anti-internationalist activism is not explicitly directed outward. Instead, the defense of the Nation against international influence relies on protecting the homeland internally by exposing domestic governmental corruption, which could necessitate the use of violence. As such, the literature did not reveal thought patterns focused on U.S. expansion through armed conflict; nor did it demonstrate ideological traits rooted in ethnic cleansing aspirations, even though there is some evidence of racist membership within modern militias.<sup>165</sup>

In summary, theoretical linkages can be made to modern Patriot Militias and selected elements of nationalist ideology. Exclusionary conceptualizations are made

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<sup>165</sup> See Perliger, page 31, for a brief commentary on possible militia connections to racist organizations. However, he again dismisses ethnic superiority rationale as the primary reason for militia formation.

possible through complex NWO conspiracies, promulgated by intense aspirations of national and cultural autonomy. The discontent directed towards the Federal Government is reliant on perceptions of weakened independence, and is additionally fueled by notions of foreign interference with American society. Though large-scale violence has not materialized with the revival of U.S. militia groups, there is a potential for violence, evidenced by similar militia movements in the 1990's. In comparison to other far-right groups, the chances of symbolic mass violence carried out by modern militias, rather than individualized assaults, is more likely, according to Perliger's statistical analyses of U.S. militia violence. Finally, the sacredness of Nation is firmly entrenched in Patriot Militia ideology, which serves to further escalate nationalist discourses of exclusivity, autonomy, and cultural superiority.

### **Conflict Theory**

To better illuminate corresponding features of Nationalism and modern Patriot Militias, two particular models of conflict theory are engaged in the final analysis section. The proffered models, relative deprivation theory and identity theory, are widely cited frameworks in the conflict analysis field. This thesis has placed a tremendous emphasis on Nationalism, and its corresponding theoretical underpinnings. While that work is central to this project's research goals, specific elements of relative deprivation theory and identity theory supplement the analysis portion of this project, providing a deeper examination of conflict behavior and nationalist understanding. Pettman says this of Nationalism and identity:

There is nothing fixed or inevitable in any one construction of the nation, in the boundaries drawn between those who belong and those outside, or in the consequences of inclusion or exclusion, in terms of privilege or penalty, safety or danger. There are, however, characteristics intrinsic to becoming national, some of which attach to the politics of identification more generally. Nationalism, like all political identities, is relational. It is about identity *and* difference; inclusion *and* exclusion. Its boundary making produces us *and* them; making ‘the people’ and simultaneously making the others, outsiders, strangers, immigrants...<sup>166</sup>

Upon reflection, two key elements of applicable nationalist ideology became clear: constructed historiography and national mythology. The all-important question of causal correlation is still indistinct, but the potential for constructed histories to influence group formation has been indelibly marked in the Patriot Militia literature, and in the scholarship dedicated to nationalist thought. Furthermore, considerable levels of frustration were detectable in the militia research.

The theory of relative deprivation builds upon the theory of frustration-aggression presented by Dollard et al in 1939, but takes into consideration the pursuit of goals, as it relates to humankind.<sup>167</sup> Ted Gurr originally conceived relative deprivation theory and considered that differences between aspirations and reality are the leading contributors of aggression. To summarize, unmet goals cause conflict especially if another person,

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<sup>166</sup> Pettman 154.

<sup>167</sup> John Dollard, Leonard W. Doob, Neal E. Miller, Orval Hobart Mowrer, and Robert R. Sears. *Frustration and Aggression*. New Haven: Pub. for the Institute of Human Relations by Yale UP, (1939): Print.

group, or nation impedes those goals. Gurr hypothesized that “The potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity.”<sup>168</sup> If a person or group considers that their circumstances could be improved but an opposing party or political formation is hindering that improvement, or enjoying a more acceptable set of circumstances, then the frustrated party is exhibiting a “relative” perception of what they themselves should be experiencing, thus increasing frustration and the likelihood of aggressive behavior.

Gurr’s theory has faced some criticism by scholars, chiefly because measurements of frustration are psychologically ambiguous, especially in the application of causal correlations to impending aggression.<sup>169</sup> The criticisms vary, but a key flaw is revealed when one considers various levels of frustration across a number of different communities. Some communities experience high levels of repression, which should correspond to intense group frustration. Nonetheless, large-scale frustration and perceptions of relative deprivation do not instinctively manifest themselves in aggressive acts. Communities can exist in repressive social environments for extended periods of time, failing to achieve goals relative to other social communities. That reality does not infer imminent aggression.

The application of relative deprivation theory to this research is utilized because right-wing extremism in the U.S. has historically exhibited severe levels of frustration

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<sup>168</sup> Ted Gurr. *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (1970): 24. Print.

<sup>169</sup> Joan Neff Gurney, and Kathleen J. Tierney. "Relative Deprivation And Social Movements: A Critical Look At Twenty Years Of Theory And Research." *The Sociological Quarterly* 23.1 (1982): 33-47. Print.

within far-right groups. Reasons for frustration vary among the case studies, but each group, including modern Patriot Militias, revealed clear perceptions of societal failings. Their grievances have manifested themselves in acts in of aggression, both discursively and physically. This is especially noticeable because past acts of violence were carried out by individuals, Timothy McVeigh in particular, who legitimized aggression by voicing intense frustrations and relative perceptions of inequality, however misplaced those perceptions might have been. The application of social identity theory helps to elucidate this conundrum.

Elements of social identity theory include the study of group behavior and conflict, how identity conflicts can appear seemingly intractable, and if identity is determined or achieved throughout an individual's life. Conflict scholar Louis Kriesberg presents an essential viewpoint on cultural relevance and the importance of understanding social identity frameworks. He states:

Many identities, then, are not based on ascribed traits but on shared values, beliefs, or concerns, which are varyingly open to acquisition by choice. This includes shared religious adherence—indeed, members of many religious communities proselytize to win converts to their faith. This is also true for political ideologies, attachment to particular pieces of land, or practicing a particular way of life.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Louis Kriesberg. "Identity Issues." *Beyond Intractability*. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted: July (2003): 1. Web.

As formerly demonstrated, modern Patriot Militias rely on strict perceptions of normative American values, belief systems, citizen rights, and political frameworks. The combination of those features is symptomatic of rigid identity framing. Kriesberg's scholarship recognizes the shared cultural aspects of identity formation. Shared narratives concerning traditional American culture are highly salient within the Patriot Militia culture, further buttressed by nationalist inclinations towards constructed historiography.

In similar fashion, the analysis of collective groups inheriting trauma from ancestors is germane. Defined as "chosen traumas" by Vamik Volkan, these powerful narratives of injustice, violence, and calamity are conferred to subsequent generations by those who experienced the tragedy themselves, or by those who are continuing traditional narratives of experienced trauma.<sup>171</sup> Vamik Volkan discusses the following:

When the mental representation becomes so burdensome that members of the group are unable to initiate or resolve the mourning of their losses or reverse their feelings of humiliation, their traumatized self-images are passed down to later generations in the hope that others may be able to mourn and resolve what the prior generation could not. Because the traumatized self-images passed down by members of the group all refer to the same calamity, they become part of the group identity, an ethnic marker on the canvas of the ethnic tent.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Vamik D. Volkan. *Bloodlines: from Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. Boulder, CO: Westview, (1998): 45. Print.

<sup>172</sup> Volkan 45.

Militia sympathizers express trauma being passed down through generations, with repeated rhetoric concerning Ruby Ridge, Idaho and Waco, Texas. Throughout the literature research process, almost every group discussed the loss of innocent lives in these cases, continuing escalatory narratives of hate and anger towards the U.S. Federal Government. In addition, Patriot Militias relate clouded perceptions of historical events to their own social realities by repeatedly memorializing the founding of America and the sacrifices endured by those early American figures. At its core, Patriot Militia historiography parallels the constructed national histories so prevalent in extreme nationalist discourse.

To highlight this phenomenon, Sarah Cobb links constructed narratives and perceptions of shared histories to conflict behavior. Cobb's conceptualization of "origin myths" is similar to Volkan's framework of "chosen trauma".<sup>173</sup> They are stories of violence passed down through individuals or generations that delineate specific actors involved and attribute sources of responsibility for the violence: "Such myths are stories about the past that forecast a particular future; they justify violence in the present and in the future as they preserve and embellish the story of the origin of the violence, which is never a function of the acts of the storyteller, the narrator, but always a result of the acts of the 'other'."<sup>174</sup> Patriot Militia discourse repeatedly predicts the collapse of America, assigning blame to the Federal Government and foreign bodies, thereby constructing infectious narratives of "the other".

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<sup>173</sup> Sarah Cobb. "Fostering Coexistence in Identity-based Conflicts: Towards a Narrative Approach." *Imagine Coexistence*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, (2003): 294-310. Print.

<sup>174</sup> Cobb 294-295.

The legitimization of violence is publicized by origin myths because the teller is systematically assigning blame to another person or group. The stories being circulated are usually narrow in scope, focused solely on retribution for perceived injustices or past grievances. Cobb says, “Stories based on origin myths are problematic not because they misrepresent the ‘facts’ but because they are very ‘thin’—they are a shorthand version of history that is condensed precisely so it can authorize violence towards others.”<sup>175</sup> Like nationalist historiography, the narratives of Patriot Militias might capture some elements of historical reality, but those selections fail to encompass the contextual accuracy of more developed, unbiased accounts.

Cobb considers four key characteristics of origin mythology: time, characters, causality, and values or themes.<sup>176</sup> The “time” feature is again most apparent in historical accounts used by Patriot Militias. The groups are focused on past wrongs perpetrated by the U.S. Federal Government, often appearing incapable of looking towards a coexistent future. Moreover, continuing aspects of origin mythology are evidenced by the distinct role of “characters” in Patriot Militia narratives. Although Cobb describes minimal characters in her origin myth analysis, this does not suggest a quantifiable number necessary to constitute an origin myth.<sup>177</sup> Rather, the parties and numbers of persons can be vast or minute, but key characterizations of “villain” and “victim” (Federal Government and Patriot Militias) remain consistent. The “causality” aspect depends on a “linear logic” that ascribes all responsibility for past transgressions to another, failing to

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<sup>175</sup> Cobb 300.

<sup>176</sup> Cobb 300.

<sup>177</sup> Cobb 300.

consider alternate lines of reasoning.<sup>178</sup> Individuals associated with Patriot Militias noticeably pursue this method of rationalization. The Patriot Militias attribute group marginalization and extreme levels of structural violence to the U.S. Federal Government, the government assigns blame for civil unrest upon the militias, and the narrative cycle of victim/villain continues.

The final features of origin mythology and conflict behavior analysis are “values and themes”. Cobb articulates thematic rudiments, “Overarching themes include hopelessness, suffering, justice, rights, vengeance, and in-group loyalty.”<sup>179</sup> The rigorous literature and case study research conducted in this project wholly confirms those common themes. After concluding the literature research portion of this study, it remains extraordinarily difficult to dismiss correlative features of origin mythology and narrative themes promoted by Patriot Militias.

The argument presented in this analysis section contends that nationalist ideology, and its specific focus on constructed national history, increases conflict behavior by reinforcing perceptions of relative deprivation in past and current militia groups. In essence, the conflict phenomena present within right-wing extremism is fundamentally linked to intractable identity aspirations. The escalation of identity grievances is not simply correlative to the denial of identity needs. Instead, rigid perceptions of individual and national identity are fueled by constructed historiographies, which are indeed analogous to extreme nationalist ideology.

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<sup>178</sup> Cobb 300.

<sup>179</sup> Cobb 300.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Conclusions**

More research must be carried out to fully answer the research questions posed in this project. This thesis has tested the limits of Nationalism theory, often revealing many more questions than answers. I do not, however, consider the intellectual struggles encountered during this process with any negative connotations. Certainly, the intensity of this study has produced a deep personal interest in long-term, post-graduate research. The complexities of Nationalism, and the effects of nationalist ideology, indeed continue to frame national identity processes, signifying the need for increased scholarship and critical analysis. Concurrently, additional research of far-right movements in the U.S. is needed to understand why such groups continue to mobilize upon anti-governmental and anti-internationalist discourse.

The research conclusions of this project are provided in the closing commentary, each of the following questions being addressed in turn: (1) To what extent does the phenomenon of Nationalism and nationalist ideology contribute to the mobilization of contemporary U.S. Patriot Militia movements; (2) Are these groups exhibiting new forms of nationalist ideology; (3) Do the grievances and ideologies espoused by these groups represent new brands of national discontent opposed to current U.S. governmental systems; (4) How do these forms of nationalism operationalize, and how is current behavior different in comparison to previous U.S. militia organizations and historical

movements of extreme Nationalism? In an effort to improve clarity and avoid redundancy, the successive observations briefly synthesize research findings, which have been detailed at length in prior analysis sections.

According to the literature, Nationalism and nationalist ideology are intrinsic to far-right U.S. movements. The exclusionary discourse of extreme Nationalism is not only specific to historical U.S. militia movements—an observation established by rigid anti-governmental and anti-internationalist narratives in modern Patriot Militias. Nevertheless, the extent to which nationalist thought contributes to Patriot Militia mobilization is still unclear. Comprehensive field research could potentially reveal answers to this question if field findings were to be quantified and analyzed, thereby constructing a more verifiable body of research. This project maintained a theoretical approach, and, as such, cannot conclusively determine correlative levels of nationalist thought in modern Patriot Militias.

Extensive literature research suggests that ideological features of Nationalism in historical far-right movements parallel modern U.S. Patriot Militia movements. Although extreme xenophobia, racism, and ethnic cleansing aspirations were not readily apparent in current U.S. militia movements, other comparable features of nationalist ideology were present. Intense perspectives of national autonomy, exclusivist notions of social identity, narratives of national sacredness, and the potential for violent sacrifice coalesce to demonstrate clear nationalist ideologies. Research did not reveal new evolutions of Nationalism or nationalist consciousness, but did allow for critical analysis of nationalist thought in historic right-wing groups, and in U.S. Patriot Militias.

Grievances directed at the U.S. Federal Government by contemporary militias were relatively similar to past movements of right-wing extremism. The literature uncovered conspiracy theories rooted in NWO narratives and perceptions of unconstitutional legislation, which summarily corresponds to past and present far-right movements. Excluding the discourse of ethnic superiority in historical case studies, the severe discontent directed at U.S. governmental systems was largely comparable.

Additional research is needed to understand how Nationalism operationalizes within U.S. militia groups. A broad qualitative study of militia members could perhaps reveal elements of Nationalism that were absent from the literature, or confirm findings presented in the analysis section of this project. Regardless, field research is necessary to accurately determine nationalist sentiments in U.S. Patriot Militias, before any confirmable generalizations are applied to modern U.S. militia movements.

This project has clarified significant elements of Nationalism, nationalist ideology, and modern U.S. militia movements. Though at times frustrating—due to the complexities and research limitations of this undertaking—the endeavor has proven to be the most satisfying piece of my academic work to date. I most fervently hope that the research presented in this thesis increases knowledge, supports conflict analysis of similar groups, and has helped to reveal underlying causes of conflict that could be incorporated within future resolution processes. It has truly been a pleasure to work with my colleagues in the 2012/2013 Cohort, and I express my deepest gratitude to the faculty and staff at George Mason University and the University of Malta.

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

John Daniel Bales received his Bachelor of Science in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University in 2011. He has owned and operated a company in Northern Virginia for over ten years, also serving in the U.S. Army Reserve and Individual Ready Reserve from 2000-2008.