

Para Irene Castells Oliván,  
historiadora de utopías

# The Power of Identity

---

Manuel Castells

 **BLACKWELL**  
*Publishers*

1997

### Up in Arms against the New World Order: the American Militia and the Patriot Movement in the 1990s<sup>18</sup>

*In brief, the New World Order is a utopian system in which the US economy (along with the economy of every other nation) will be "globalized"; the wage levels of all US and European workers will be brought down to those of workers in the Third World; national boundaries will for all practical purposes cease to exist; an increased flow of Third World immigrants into the United States and Europe will have produced a non-White majority everywhere in the formerly White areas of the world; an elite consisting of international financiers, the masters of mass media, and managers of multinational corporations will call the shots; and the United Nations peacekeeping forces will be used to keep anyone from opting out of the system.*

William Pierce, *National Vanguard*<sup>19</sup>

*The Internet was one of the major reasons the militia movement expanded faster than any hate group in history. The militia's lack of an organized center was more than made up for by the instant communication and rumor potential of this new medium. Any militia member in remote Montana who had a computer and a modem could be part of an entire*

<sup>18</sup> The main source of information on the American militia and the "Patriots" is the Southern Poverty Law Center, headquartered in Montgomery, Alabama. This remarkable organization has displayed extraordinary courage and effectiveness in protecting citizens against hate groups in America since its foundation in 1979. As part of its program, it has established a Klanwatch/Militia Task Force which provides accurate information and analysis to understand and counteract new and old, anti-government and anti-people extremist groups. For most recent information, used in my analysis, see Klanwatch/Militia Task Force (1996, subsequently cited as KMTF). A well-documented account of the American militia in the 1990s is Stern (1996). I have also used the excellent analysis provided by my doctoral student Matthew Zook on militia groups and the Internet in 1996 (Zook, 1996). Additional sources specifically used in the analysis presented in this chapter are J. Cooper (1995); Anti-Defamation League (1994, 1995); Armond (1995); Armstrong (1995); Bennett (1995); Berlet and Lyons (1995); *Broadcasting and Cable* (1995); *Business Week* (1995d); Coalition for Human Dignity (1995); Cooper (1995); Heard (1995); Helvarg (1995); Jordan (1995); Ivins (1995); Maxwell and Tapia (1995); Sheps (1995); *The Nation* (1995); Orr (1995); Pollith (1995); Ross (1995); *The Gallup Poll Monthly* (1995); *The New Republic* (1995); *The New York Times Sunday* (1995a, b); *The Progressive* (1995); *Time* (1995); WEPIN Store (1995); Dees and Corcoran (1996); Winerip (1996).

<sup>19</sup> Quote from White supremacist William Pierce's article in the March 1994 issue of his journal *National Vanguard*, cited by KMTF (1996: 37). Pierce is head of the National Alliance and author of the best-selling novel *The Turner Diaries*.

*worldwide network that shared his or her thoughts, aspirations, organizing strategies and fears – a global family.*

Kenneth Stern, *A Force upon the Plain*, p. 228

The blast of a truck loaded with fertilizer-based explosives in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995 not only blew up a federal government building, killing 169 people, but it also exposed a powerful undercurrent of American society, until then relegated to traditional hate groups and political marginality. Timothy McVeigh, the main suspect in the bombing, used to carry with him William Pierce's novel about an underground cell, *The Patriots*, that bombs a federal building; McVeigh reportedly called Pierce's private number hours before the actual Oklahoma bombing. McVeigh, and his army buddy, Terry Nichols (both awaiting trial at the time of writing) were found to be loosely related to the Michigan Militia. The bombing occurred on the second anniversary of the Waco assault, in which most members of the Davidian cult, and their children, were killed in a siege by federal agents, an event denounced, as a rallying cry, by militia groups all around the United States.<sup>20</sup>

The militia groups are not terrorist, but some of their members may well be, organized in a different, but ideologically related form of movement, the "underground patriots." These are constituted on the basis of autonomous, clandestine cells, which set up their own targets in accordance with views pervasive throughout the movement. In 1994–6 a number of bombings, bank robberies, railroad sabotage, and other violent acts are believed to have been committed by such groups, and the intensity and lethality of their actions are increasing. Tons of explosives have been stolen from commercial sites, and stocks of military weaponry, including Stinger portable missiles, have disappeared from military arsenals. Attempts to develop bacteriological weapons have been discovered. And tens of thousands of "Patriots" around the United States are armed with war weapons, and undergo regular training in guerrilla tactics.<sup>21</sup>

The militia are the most militant, and organized, wing of a much broader, self-proclaimed "Patriot movement,"<sup>22</sup> whose ideological galaxy encompasses established, extreme conservative organizations,

<sup>20</sup> The Texas Militia issued the following appeal a few days before April 19, 1995, the second anniversary of the Waco incident: "All able-bodied citizens are to assemble with their arms to celebrate their right to keep and bear arms and to assemble as militias in defense of the Republic" (cited in the editorial of *The Nation*, 1995: 656).

<sup>21</sup> KMTF (1996).

<sup>22</sup> KMTF (1996); Stern (1996).

such as the John Birch Society; a whole array of traditional, white supremacist, neo-nazi, and anti-semitic groups, including the Ku-Klux-Klan, and the Posse Comitatus; fanatic religious groups such as Christian Identity, an anti-semitic sect emanating from Victorian England's British Israelism; anti-federal government groups, such as the Counties' Rights Movements, Wise Use anti-environmental coalition, the National Taxpayers' Union, and defenders of "Common Law" courts. The Patriots' galaxy also extends, in loose forms, to the powerful Christian Coalition, as well as to a number of militant "Right to Life" groups, and counts on the sympathy of many members of the National Rifle Association, and pro-gun advocates. The direct appeal of the Patriots may reach to as many as 5 million people in America, according to well-informed sources,<sup>23</sup> although the very character of the movement, with its blurred boundaries, and the lack of organized membership, makes impossible an accurate statistical estimate. Still, its influence can be counted in millions, not thousands, of supporters. What these disparate groups, formerly unrelated, came to share in the 1990s, and what broadens their appeal, is their common, declared enemy: the US federal government, as representative of the "New World Order," being set up against the will of American citizens. According to views pervasive throughout the Patriot movement, this "New World Order," aimed at destroying American sovereignty, is enacted by a conspiracy of global financial interests and global bureaucrats that have captured the US federal government. At the core of this new system are the World Trade Organization, the Trilateral Commission, the International Monetary Fund, and, above all, the United Nations, whose "peacekeeping forces" are seen as an international, mercenary army, spearheaded by Hong Kong policemen and Gurkha units, ready to suppress people's sovereignty. Four events seemed to confirm this conspiracy for the Patriots: the passing of NAFTA in 1993; the approval by Clinton of the Brady Bill in 1994, establishing limited controls on the sale of some types of automatic weapons; the siege of white supremacist Randy Weaver in Idaho, resulting in the killing of his wife by the FBI, in 1992; and the tragic siege of Waco, leading to the death of David Koresh and his followers in 1993. A paranoid reading of these events led to the conviction that the government was proceeding to disarm citizens, to subdue them later, submitting Americans to surveillance from hidden cameras, and black helicopters, and implanting bio-chips in the newborn. To this global threat, on jobs, on privacy, on liberty, on the American way of life, they oppose the Bible and the original American Constitution, expunged of its Amendments. In

<sup>23</sup> Berlet and Lyons (1995); KMTF (1996); Winerip (1996).

accordance with these texts, both received from God, they affirm the sovereignty of citizens and its direct expression in county governments, not acknowledging the authority of federal government, its laws, its courts, as well as the validity of the Federal Reserve Bank. The choice is dramatic. In the words of the Militia of Montana, created in February 1994, and an organizational inspiration for the whole movement: "Join the Army and Serve the UN or Join America and Serve the Militia" (Motto of WWW home page of the Montana Militia). Federal agents, particularly those from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, are considered to be in the frontline of the repression against Americans on behalf of the emerging world government. This, in the view of the militia, justifies making federal agents potential targets of the movement. Thus, as popular broadcaster Gordon Liddy put it in one of his talk shows: "They've got a big target [on their chest]: ATF. Don't shoot at that because they've got a vest on underneath that. Head shots, head shots. Kill the sons of bitches!"<sup>24</sup> In some segments of this highly diverse Patriot movement there is also a powerful mythology rooted in eschatological views of the world and End of Times prophecies (see chapter 1). Following the Book of Revelations, chapter 13, preachers such as tele-evangelist Pat Robertson, the leader of the Christian Coalition, remind Christians that they may be asked to submit to the satanic "Mark of the Beast," variously identified as new codes on paper money, supermarket bar codes, or microchip technology.<sup>25</sup> Resisting the new global, ungodly order, coming at the End of Times, is seen as a Christian duty and an American citizen's right. Yet, the sinister colorfulness of the movement's mythology sometimes obscures its profile, and actually downplays its political and social significance. This is why it is important to pay attention to the diversity of the movement, while still emphasizing its underlying commonality.

#### The militias and the Patriots: a multi-thematic information network

Militias, self-organized citizens armed to defend their country, religion, and freedom, are institutions that played an important role during the first century of America's existence.<sup>26</sup> The state militias were replaced by state national guards in 1900. However, in the 1990s, starting with the Montana Militia, right-wing populist groups have formed "unorganized militias," using some legal ambiguity in federal

<sup>24</sup> Stern (1996: 221).

<sup>25</sup> Berlet and Lyons (1995).

<sup>26</sup> Whisker (1992); J. Cooper (1995).

laws to circumvent the legal prohibition to form military units outside of government control. The most distinctive feature of militia groups is that they are armed, sometimes with war weapons, and are structured in a military-style chain of command. By the end of 1995, KMTF could count 441 active militias in all 50 states, with paramilitary training sites in at least 23 states (see figure 2.1). Numbers of militia members are difficult to estimate. Berlet and Lyons ventured to evaluate them, in 1995, at between 15,000 and 40,000.<sup>27</sup> By all accounts they are growing rapidly. There is no national organization. Each state's militia is independent, and there are sometimes several, unrelated militia groups in the same state: 33 in Ohio, with about 1,000 members, and hundreds of thousands of sympathizers, according to police sources.<sup>28</sup> The Militia of Montana is the founding example, but the largest is the Michigan Militia, with several thousand active members. Their ideology, beyond the common opposition to the new world order and to the federal government, is highly diversified. Their membership is overwhelmingly white, Christian, and predominantly male. They certainly include a significant number of racists, anti-semites, and sexists among their ranks. Yet, most militia groups do not define themselves as racist or sexist, and some of them (for instance the Michigan Militia) make an explicit anti-racist statement in their propaganda. In Zook's analysis of militia pages in the World Wide Web, focusing on 11 of the most popular militia, seven of the home pages made anti-racist statements, four made no mention of race, and none contained overt racism.<sup>29</sup> Two pages took anti-sexist stands, two welcomed women, and the others did not mention sex. Indeed, the Michigan Militia refused to support the "Montana freemen," during their 1996 siege in a ranch, because they were racist. And one of the Militia Home Pages "E Pluribus Unum," part of the Ohio Militia, is run by an African-American Christian fundamentalist couple. To be sure, these statements could be faked, but given the importance of Internet posting to contact new members, it would be inconsistent to misrepresent the ideology on which new recruits are attracted. It seems that the militia and the Patriots, while including traditional racist, anti-semitic, hate groups, have a much broader ideological constituency, and this is exactly one of the reasons for their new success. Namely, their ability to reach out across the ideological spectrum to unite all sources of disaffection against the federal government. As KMTF's report says:

<sup>27</sup> Berlet and Lyons (1995).

<sup>28</sup> Winerip (1996).

<sup>29</sup> Zook (1996).

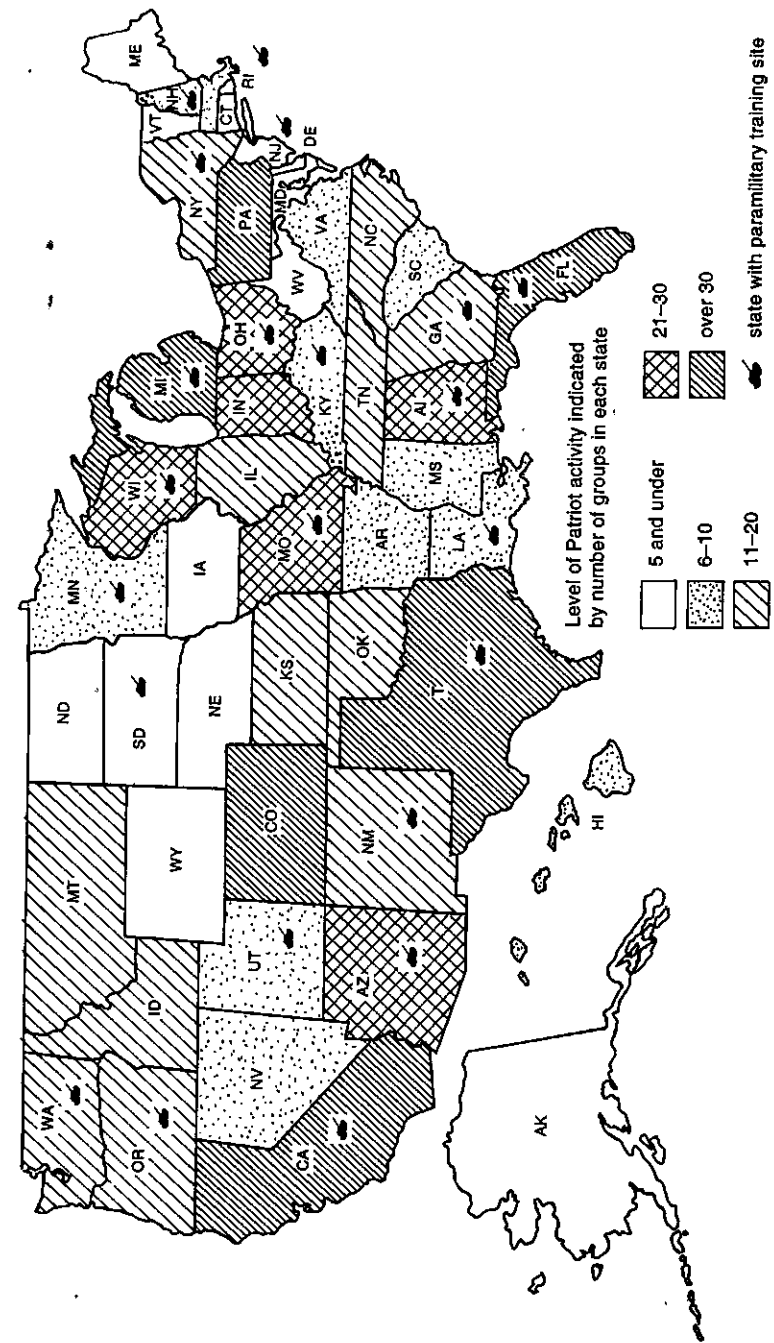


Figure 2.1 Geographical distribution of Patriot groups in the US by number of groups and paramilitary training sites in each state, 1996

Source: Southern Poverty Law Center, Klanwatch/Militia Task Force, Montgomery, Alabama, 1996

Unlike their factious white supremacist predecessors, Patriots have been able to bridge minor ideological differences in favor of a broad unity on the anti-government agenda. As a result, they have created the most inviting insurgent force in recent history, home to a wide variety of anti-government groups whose organizational roles may differ dramatically.<sup>30</sup>

Two fast-expanding components of the Patriot movement are the Counties' Rights movement, and the "Common Law" courts. The first is a militant wing of the Wise Use coalition, which has growing influence in the Western states. The coalition opposes environmental regulation enforced by the federal government and appeals to the "customs and culture" of logging, mining, and grazing on public land. Land-use zoning is equated with socialism, and management of the ecosystem is considered to be a part of the new world order.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the movement asserts the right of county sheriffs to arrest federal land managers, which prompted a number of violent incidents. People and communities are urged to acknowledge exclusively the authority of their elected officials at the municipal and county level, rejecting the federal government's right to legislate on their property. Seventy counties have passed Wise Use ordinances claiming local control over public land, and violent actions have intimidated environmentalists and federal land managers from New Mexico and Nevada to northern Idaho and Washington. Common Law courts have been established in 40 states, supported by an array of books and videos that claim to provide a legal basis for people to reject the judicial system, setting up their own "judges," "trials," and "juries." They have even established a national "Supreme Court of Common Law" with 23 justices, based on the Bible and on their own interpretation of law. Common Law followers declare themselves "sovereign," that is freemen, and refuse accordingly to pay taxes and social security, to comply with driving licensing, and to submit to all other government controls not contemplated in the original American legal body. To protect their sovereignty, and retaliate against public officials, they often file commercial liens against targeted public officials and judges, creating a nightmarish confusion in a number of county courts. As an extension of the Common Law movement, a rapidly expanding network of people, from Montana to California, refuse the authority of the Federal Reserve Bank to print money, and they issue their own bank documents, including cashier checks, with such good reproduction technology that they have often

<sup>30</sup> KMTF (1996: 14).

<sup>31</sup> Helvarg (1995).

been cashed, prompting a number of arrests for forgery and fraud. These practices are making the Common Law movement the most confrontational of all the Patriot groups, and were at the root of the three-month stand-off between "freemen" and the FBI in a ranch in Jórdan, Montana, in 1996.

Such a diverse, almost chaotic, movement cannot have a stable organization, or even a coordinating instance. Yet, the homogeneity of its core world vision and, particularly, its identification of a common enemy are remarkable. This is because linkages between groups and individuals do exist, but they are carried out through the media (radio, mainly), through books, pamphlets, speaking tours, and alternative press, by Fax, and, mainly, through the Internet.<sup>32</sup> According to KMTF, "the computer is the most vital piece of equipment in the Patriot movement's arsenal."<sup>33</sup> On the Internet there are numerous militia bulletin board systems, home pages, and chat groups; for instance, the Usenet group MAM, established in 1995. Several reasons have been proposed for the widespread use of the Internet by militiamen. One is that, as Stern writes, "Internet was the perfect culture in which to grow the virus of conspiracy theory. Messages appeared on the screen with no easy way to separate junk from credible . . . For conspiracy enthusiasts like militia members, unverified statements from cyberspace reaffirmed their set conclusions by providing an endless stream of additional 'evidence.'"<sup>34</sup> Also, the frontier spirit characteristic of the Internet fits well with the freemen, expressing themselves, and making their statement without mediation or government control. More importantly, the network structure of the Internet reproduces exactly the autonomous, spontaneous networking of militia groups, and of the Patriots at large, without boundaries, and without definite plan, but sharing a purpose, a feeling, and, most of all, an enemy. It is mainly on the Internet (backed up by Fax and direct mailing) that the movement thrives and organizes itself. It was through the Associated Electronic Network News, organized by the Thompsons in Indianapolis, that a conspiracy theory was diffused according to which the Oklahoma bombing was a provocation by the federal government similar to Hitler's arson of the Reichstag in order to crack down on the militia. Other bulletin board systems, such as the "Paul Revere Net," link up groups around the country, exchange information, circulate rumors, and coordinate actions. For example, confidential reports inform browsers that Gorbachev, after giving a speech in California saying that "we are now

<sup>32</sup> KMTF (1996); Stern (1996); Zook (1996).

<sup>33</sup> KMTF (1996: 16).

<sup>34</sup> Stern (1996: 228).

entering the new world order," went on to hide in a Southern California naval base to oversee the dismantling of America's armed forces in preparation for the arrival of the world order's army. Indeed, its arrival took place in May 1996, when a permanent base was established in New Mexico to train hundreds of German pilots in cooperation with the US Air Force. Or so thought the thousands of callers that submerged the Pentagon's switchboard after CNN reported the opening of such a base.

Radio talk shows are also important. Rush Limbaugh's audience of 20 million on 600 stations around the country is an instrument of political influence without parallel in 1990s America. While he is not a militia supporter, his themes ("femi-nazis," "eco-wacos") resonate in the movement. Other popular radio programs are more directly in tune with the Patriots: Gordon Liddy's call-in show, or *The Intelligence Report*, hosted by white supremacist Mark Koernke. Alternative cable channels, broadcasting similar topics to similar audiences, include National Empowerment Television, Jones Intercable, and Time-Warner-owned Paragon Cable in Florida, which features *Race & Reason*, an anti-semitic, racist show. A myriad of newspapers and bulletins, such as Washington DC's *Spotlight*, or the white supremacist tract *The Turner Diaries*, add to a highly decentralized, extensive network of alternative media. This network diffuses targeted information, airs people's resentment, publicizes right, extremist ideas, spreads rumors of conspiracies, and purveys the eschatological mythology that has become the cultural background for end-of-millennium right-wing populism. Thus, while the FBI looks in vain for proof of an organized conspiracy to overturn the government by force, the actual conspiracy, with no names (or multiple names), and with no organization (or hundreds of them), flows in the information networks, feeding paranoia, connecting anger, and maybe spilling blood.

### The Patriots' banners

In spite of its diversity, the Patriot movement, with the militia at its forefront, does share some common goals, beliefs, and foes. It is this set of values and purposes that constructs a world vision and, ultimately, defines the movement itself.

There is an underlying, simple, but powerful view of the world and society which is expressed in different forms in the Patriot movement. According to this vision, America is divided into two kinds of people: producers and parasites. Producers, working people, are oppressed between two layers of parasites: corrupt government officials, wealthy corporate elites, and bankers, at the top; and stupid and lazy people,

undeserving of the welfare they receive of society, at the bottom. The situation is being made worse by the current process of globalization, steered by the United Nations and international financial institutions, on behalf of corporate elites and government bureaucracies, which threatens to transform ordinary people into mere slaves of a worldwide plantation-like economy. God will prevail, but for this citizens must take up their guns to fight for "the future of America itself."<sup>35</sup> From this world vision emerges a specific set of targets for the movement, which organize its practice.

First of all, the militia, and the Patriots in general, are an extreme libertarian movement (and, in this sense, very different from traditional Nazis or fascists who call for a strong state). Their enemy is the federal government. In their view, the basic units of society are the individual, the family, and the local community. Beyond that immediate level of face-to-face acknowledgment, government is only tolerated as the direct expression of the citizens' will; for example, county governments, with elected officials who can be known and controlled on a personal basis. Higher levels of government are suspected, and the federal government is denounced outright as illegitimate, as having usurped citizens' rights and manipulated the Constitution to overstep the original mandate of the founding fathers of America. For militiamen, Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry are the heroes, and Alexander Hamilton the obvious villain. This rejection of the legitimacy of federal government expresses itself in very concrete, powerful attitudes and actions: rejection of federal taxes, refusal of environmental regulation and land-use planning, sovereignty of common law courts, jury nullification (namely deciding as jurors in court cases not in accordance with the law but according to their consciences), pre-eminence of county governments over higher authorities, and hatred of federal law-enforcement agencies. At the limit, the movement calls for civil disobedience against the government, backing it up, if and when necessary, with the guns of "natural law"-abiding citizens.

While the federal government and its enforcement agencies are the immediate enemies, and the immediate cause of the mobilization of the Patriots, a more ominous threat looms on the horizon: the new world order. The new world order, a notion popularized by televangelist Pat Robertson, extrapolating from Bush's post-Cold War end-of-history ideology, implies that the federal government is actively working toward the goal of one world government in collaboration with Russia (particularly with Gorbachev, considered to be a key strategist in the plot). This project is supposedly being carried out by

<sup>35</sup> M. Cooper (1995).

the intermediary of international organizations: the United Nations, the new World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund. The placement of American military troops under the command of the United Nations, and the signing of NAFTA, are considered but the first steps toward such a new order, often explicitly associated with the coming of the Information Age. The actual impact on the American people is seen as their economic impoverishment for the benefit of multinational corporations and banks, and their political disfranchisement for the sake of global political bureaucracies.

Together with these localist, libertarian strands, a third major theme runs through the movement: a backlash against feminists (not against women as long as they remain in their traditional role), gays, and minorities (as beneficiaries of government protection). There is one clearly predominant characteristic in the Patriot movement: in a large majority, they are white, heterosexual males. The "Angry White Male" (actually the name of one Patriot organization) seem to have come together in this mixture of reactions to economic deprivation, reaffirmation of traditional values and privileges, and cultural backlash. Traditional national and family values (that is, patriarchalism) are affirmed against what are considered to be excessive privileges accorded by society to gender, cultural, and ethnic minorities, as exemplified by affirmative action and anti-discrimination legislation. While this theme does connect with a much older rejection of racial equality by white supremacist groups and anti-immigrant coalitions, it is new in its comprehensiveness, particularly because of the explicit rejection of women's rights, and in its hostile targeting of liberal values diffused by the mainstream media.

A fourth theme present in most of the movement is the intolerant affirmation of the superiority of Christian values, so linking up closely with the Christian fundamentalist movement, analyzed in chapter 1. Most Patriots seem to subscribe to the pretension that Christian values and rituals, as interpreted by their defenders, must be enforced through the institutions of society; for example, mandatory prayer in public schools and the screening of libraries and the media to censor what would be considered anti-Christian or anti-family values. The widespread anti-abortion movement, with fanatic assassins at its fringes, is its most notorious organizational instrument. Christian fundamentalism seems to be pervasive throughout the whole movement. It might seem paradoxical; this connection between an extreme libertarian movement, such as the militia, and Christian fundamentalism, a movement that aims at theocracy and therefore would seek government imposition of moral and religious values on its citizens. However, this is only a contradiction in the historical horizon,

since in 1990s America both fundamentalists and libertarians converge on the destruction of a federal government that is perceived as being apart from both God and The People.

Guns and Bibles could well be the movement's motto.<sup>36</sup> Guns were the rallying point around which the militia came together in 1994 in response to the Brady Bill. A vast coalition was formed against this, and subsequent attempts at gun control. Around the powerful lobby of the National Rifle Association, controlling many votes in Congress, coalesced rural folks around the country, gun shop owners, extreme libertarians, and militia groups, to make the defense of the constitutional right to bear arms the last line of defense for America as it ought to be. Guns equal freedom. The Wild West rides again, on the streets of Los Angeles as on the Michigan farms. Two of the deepest features of American culture, its rugged individualism and its mistrust of despotic governments, from which many immigrants escape to come to America, provide the seal of authenticity to the resistance against threats generated by the informationalization of society, the globalization of economy, and the professionalization of politics.

### Who are the Patriots?

A component of the movement is certainly made up of disaffected farmers in the Midwest and in the West, supported by a miscellaneous cast of small town societies, from coffeeshop owners to traditionalist pastors. But it would be inaccurate to consider that the appeal of the movement is limited to a rural world phased out by technological modernization. There are no demographic data on the movement's composition, but a simple look at the geographical distribution of the militia (figure 2.1) shows its territorial, thus social, diversity. The groups of states with the highest numbers of militia activity include such diverse areas as Pennsylvania, Michigan, Florida, Texas, Colorado, and California, more or less following the most populous states (minus New York, plus Colorado), but this is precisely the point: militia seem to be where people are, all over the country, not just in Montana. If we consider the Christian Coalition to be a part of the movement, then Patriots are present in the suburbs of most large metropolitan areas (there are about 1.5 million members of the Christian Coalition). Some militia groups, for instance in New Hampshire, and in California, seem to recruit among computer professionals. Thus, it does not seem that the Patriots are a class-based, or territorially specific movement. Rather, they are, fundamentally, a cultural and political movement, defenders of the

<sup>36</sup> Maxwell and Tapia (1995).



traditions of the country against cosmopolitan values, and of self-rule of local people against the imposition of global order. However, if class is not relevant in the composition of the movement, it is relevant in the identification of its enemies. Corporate elites; bankers; the wealthy, powerful and arrogant big firms, and their lawyers; and scientists and researchers, are their enemies. Not as a class, but as representatives of an un-American world order. Indeed, the ideology is not anti-capitalist, but is, rather, an ideology in defense of free capitalism, opposed to a corporate manifestation of state capitalism that appears to be close to socialism. Thus, a class analysis of the Patriots does not seem to address the essence of the movement. It is a political insurgency that cuts across class lines and regional differentiation. And it relates to the social and political evolution of American society at large.

#### The militia, the Patriots, and American society in the 1990s

Right-wing populism is hardly a novelty in the United States; indeed, it is a phenomenon that has played an important role in American politics throughout the country's history.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, angry popular reactions to economic distress have occurred in both America and Europe in different forms, from classic fascism and Nazism to the xenophobic and ultra-nationalist movements of recent years. One of the conditions that can help explain the fast spread of the militia, besides the Internet, is growing economic hardship and social inequality in America. Men's average income has deteriorated substantially in the past two decades, particularly during the 1980s. Families are barely maintaining the living standards of a quarter of a century ago by putting in the contribution of two wage earners instead of one. On the other hand, the top 1 percent of households increased its average income from \$327,000 to about \$567,000 between 1976 and 1993, while average family income remains at about \$31,000. CEO's pay is 190 times higher than that of their average worker.<sup>38</sup> For the American worker and small entrepreneur, the age of globalization and informationalization has been the age of a relative, and often an absolute, decline in their standard of living, reversing the historical trend of the improvement of each generation's material well-being over that of previous generations. Occasionally, the culture of the new global rich adds insult to injury. For instance, Montana, the seedbed of the new militia, is also one of the favorite destinations of the new billionaires, fond of acquiring thousands of acres of pristine land to

<sup>37</sup> Lipset and Raab (1978).

<sup>38</sup> *The New York Times* (1995b).

build ranches from which to run their global networks. Ranchers in the area resented these moves.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, at the moment when the traditional family becomes indispensable as an instrument of both financial and psychological security, it has been falling apart, in the wake of the gender war ignited by the resistance of patriarchy to women's rights (see chapter 4). Cultural challenges to sexism and to heterosexual orthodoxy confuse masculinity. In addition, a new wave of immigration, this time from Latin America and Asia, and the growing multi-ethnicity of America, although in continuity with the country's history, add to the feeling of loss of control. The shifts from agriculture and manufacturing to services, and from goods handling to information processing, undermine acquired skills and work subcultures. And the end of the Cold War, with the collapse of communism, eliminates the easy identification of the external enemy, hampering the chances of bringing America together in a common cause. The age of information becomes the age of confusion, and thus the age of fundamental affirmation of traditional values and uncompromising rights. Bureaucratic, and sometimes violent, reactions by law-enforcement agencies to various forms of protest deepen the anger, sharpen the feelings, and seem to justify the call to arms, bringing the new American militia in direct confrontation with the emerging global order.