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Patriots, Politics, and the Oklahoma City Bombing.

By Stuart A. Wright. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xv + 237 pp. Tables, figures, references, index. \$70.00 cloth, \$22.99 paper.

Stuart A. Wright offers an interesting account of the rise of the Patriot movement in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. Employing insights from social movement theory, he argues that Patriots—that group of Americans who regularly advocated and practiced armed resistance to government authorities in the 1980s and 1990s—emerged at the intersection of the Cold War, race politics of the 1960s, and the farm crisis and the rise of white supremacist groups in the 1980s. Thus, the horror of Timothy McVeigh's destruction of the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, was not the act of a crazed "lone wolf" bent on revenge for specific government acts but part of a broader movement.

Wright offers his most useful insights in addressing two facets of the Patriot movement: its Cold War genesis and the events that supported McVeigh's bomb plot. He persuasively analyzes the ways that groups like the John

Birch Society were able to frame federal enforcement of civil rights laws as communist conspiracies and thus insist that resistance to federal law enforcement was, in fact, real patriotism in the name of states' rights. This "states' rights" frame became central to Patriot ideology and served as a powerful recruitment tool for Americans who came to believe that the federal government was abusing its powers in enforcing other laws, especially those regulating gun ownership.

Wright interviewed Timothy McVeigh several times before his execution, and his analysis of events at Elohim City, the eastern Oklahoma compound where many Patriots and white supremacists lived and where many analysts believe the conspiracy to destroy the Murrah building was centered, benefits from this access. Whereas the government case against McVeigh delineates a small, three-person (or so) conspiracy, others, including Wright, argue that McVeigh received far more active and important support from Elohim City residents. His analysis of this period is insightful, useful, and important.

Other parts of the book are useful but less innovative. The centrality of the farm crisis of the Great Plains in the rise of the Patriot movement is well known, and Wright restates others' arguments. That the Patriot movement emerged in a historical context is similarly well established. Wright additionally emphasizes the importance of federal government mobilization for the War on Drugs as a source of Patriot fear and activism; however, this claim rests on a historical stretch: the Patriots mobilized (in part) in fear of federal gun control law enforcement efforts that rose in response to Patriot violence, not resistance to control of the trade in illegal drugs. This claim requires further exploration to be fully persuasive. Finally, his analysis of Patriot ideology is limited; strong on the process of how the Patriot movement rose, the book is less enlightening about what Patriots wanted, why they wanted it, and how these desires fit into the broader context of American political life. Such concerns, however, do not change the fact that this is an accessible, engaging, and insightful work. **Lane Crothers**, *Department of Politics and Government, Illinois State University*.