



FIGURE 8.3. The flag of Virginia, illustrating the Liberty/oppression foundation.

*Sic semper tyrannis* (“Thus always to tyrants”). That was the rallying cry said to have been shouted by Marcus Brutus as he and his co-conspirators murdered Julius Caesar for acting like an alpha male. John Wilkes Booth shouted it from center stage at Ford’s Theatre moments after shooting Abraham Lincoln (whom Southerners perceived to be a tyrant who prevented them from declaring independence).

Murder often seems virtuous to revolutionaries. It just somehow *feels* like the right thing to do, and these feelings seem far removed from Trivers’s reciprocal altruism and tit for tat. This is not fairness. This is Boehm’s political transition and reverse dominance.

If the original triggers of this foundation include bullies and tyrants, the current triggers include almost anything that is perceived as imposing illegitimate restraints on one’s liberty, including government (from the perspective of the American right). In 1993, when Timothy McVeigh was arrested a few hours after he blew up a federal office building in Oklahoma

City, killing 168 people, he was wearing a T-shirt that said *Sic semper tyrannis*. Less ominously, the populist anger of the Tea Party relies on this foundation, as shown in their unofficial flag, which says “Don’t tread on me” (see figure 7.4).

But despite these manifestations on the right, the urge to band together to oppose oppression and replace it with political equality seems to be at least as prevalent on the left. For example, one liberal reader of my “Republicans” essay stated Boehm’s thesis precisely:

The enemy of society to a Liberal is someone who abuses their power (Authority) and still demands, and in some cases forces, others to “respect” them anyway. . . . A Liberal authority is someone or something that earns society’s respect through making things happen *that unify society and suppress its enemy*. [Emphasis added.]<sup>38</sup>

It’s not just the accumulation and abuse of political power that activates the anger of the Liberty/oppression foundation; the current triggers can expand to encompass the accumulation of wealth, which helps to explain the pervasive dislike of capitalism on the far left. For example, one liberal reader explained to me, “Capitalism is, in the end, predatory—a moral society will be socialist, i.e., people will help each other.”

You can hear the heavy reliance on the Liberty/oppression foundation whenever people talk about social justice. The owners of a progressive coffee shop and “cultural collective” in New Paltz, New York, used this foundation, along with the Care foundation, to guide their decorating choices, as you can see in figure 8.4.

The hatred of oppression is found on both sides of the political spectrum. The difference seems to be that for lib-