

# **20 Years Later: A Look Back at the Unabomber Manifesto**

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# Contents

Abstract . . . . . 3  
Introduction . . . . . 3  
Rhetorical Analysis . . . . . 5  
Attracting, Maintaining, and Molding Followers . . . . . 6  
Securing Adoption of the Ideology by the Larger Structure . . . . . 8  
Reacting to Resistance from the Larger Structure . . . . . 10  
“Rhetorical Problems” and “Rhetorical Strategies” . . . . . 11  
Conclusion . . . . . 13  
Appendix: Sections of Theodore Kaczynski’s “Industrial Society and its Future” 16

## Abstract

On September 19, 1995, The New York Times and The Washington Post submitted to “Unabomber” Theodore Kaczynski’s demand to publish his manifesto, a treatise that would come to be known as the “Unabomber Manifesto.” While Kaczynski has been serving a life sentence for the letter-bombing campaign that he perpetrated between 1979 and 1995, the radical environmentalist rhetoric contained within his manifesto has become available to an even wider audience of current and would-be environmental extremists than when it was first published. Given its availability online, the Unabomber Manifesto has become one of the most well-known rhetorical artifacts endorsing environmental extremism. Using Herbert Simons’ “rhetorical requirements” approach, this study demonstrates that the Unabomber Manifesto represents Kaczynski’s rhetorical efforts to animate like-minded environmental extremists. The article concludes by discussing how the Unabomber Manifesto resonated with some radical environmentalists and may have even served as a catalyst for later acts committed by U.S.-based environmental extremists. By utilizing a framework for examining the rhetoric of violent revolutionary social movements, this study provides further insight into what motivates environmental extremists of today.

**Keywords:** *Unabomber Manifesto; eco-terrorism; environmental extremists; radical environmentalists; rhetorical analysis*

## Introduction

Between 1979 and 1995, Theodore “Ted” Kaczynski perpetrated a letter-bombing campaign that took the lives of three individuals and seriously injured 23 others.<sup>1</sup> Nicknamed the “Unabomber” by the FBI because his early bombing victims were connected to universities or airlines<sup>2</sup>, Kaczynski eluded authorities for almost 18 years.<sup>3</sup> During his crime spree, Kaczynski sent letter bombs to various computer scientists, industry leaders, and other individuals whom he believed promoted technology to the detriment of the natural environment in the United States. Feeling that his murderous rampage had failed to sufficiently heighten the public’s awareness of the negative consequences

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<sup>1</sup> Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf, (2011), “Preventing Lone Wolf Terrorism: Some CT Approaches Addressed,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 5(5-6), pp.4350; Clark McCauley, Sophia Moskalenko & Benjamin Van Son, (2013), “Characteristics of Lone-Wolf Violent Offenders: A Comparison of Assassins and School Attackers,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 7(1), pp.4-24; Claire Wardle, (2003), “The ‘Unabomber’ vs. the ‘Nail Bomber’: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Newspaper Coverage of Two Murder Trials,” *Journalism Studies*, 4(2), pp.239-251.

<sup>2</sup> Some researchers and law enforcement officials use the term “Unibomber” when referring to Kaczynski. However, “Unabomber,” the more commonly used term, more accurately accounts for the fact that Kaczynski sent bombs to persons affiliated with universities (“Un”) and airlines (“a”).

<sup>3</sup> Alston Chase, (2003), “Harvard and the Unabomber: The Education of an American Terrorist,” New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

of technology, in June of 1995, Kaczynski demanded that *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* publish “Industrial Society and Its Future.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Kaczynski threatened to continue his killing spree if the *Times* and the *Post* refused to publish his 34,390-word, 56-page typewritten manifesto, a treatise in which he articulated his anti-technology, proenvironment worldview.<sup>5</sup>

On September 19, 1995, both papers submitted to Kaczynski’s demands and ran 3,000-word excerpts from the treatise<sup>6</sup>, now better known as the “Unabomber Manifesto.” While publication of the manifesto garnered the Unabomber national headlines, it was also Kaczynski’s undoing. After reading the manifesto, a social worker from Schenectady, New York, noticed remarkable similarities in the language use and writing style of the Unabomber to those of his brother, Theodore Kaczynski, and notified authorities.<sup>7</sup> On April 3, 1996, FBI officials arrested Kaczynski at his cabin in Montana, effectively ending the Unabomber’s campaign of eco-terrorism.<sup>8</sup> As part of a plea bargain, Kaczynski was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.<sup>9</sup> However, Kaczynski’s imprisonment did not serve to silence his anti-technology, pro-environment message. Given its availability online, Kaczynski’s radical environmentalist rhetoric has become available to an even wider audience than when it was first published. Moreover, certain elements of the Unabomber Manifesto, a rhetorical artifact endorsing the destruction of the man-made world and the promotion of the natural environment, are reflected in the ideology and actions of many of today’s environmental extremists.

Given the covert and autonomous manner in which he perpetrated his eco-terrorism campaign, Kaczynski was the ultimate embodiment of a lone wolf environmental extremist. In discussing individuals who operate independently of a larger organizational structure, “lone wolf” describes an individual perpetrator, “lone wolves” describes a group of two or more perpetrators, and “lone wolfing” describes the acts committed by these perpetrators. Other terms commonly used by researchers and law enforcement for “lone wolf,” “lone wolves,” and “lone wolfing,” are “leaderless resistor,” “leaderless resisters,” and “leaderless resistance,” respectively. A concept developed and popularized by White supremacist Louis Beam in the hope of stimulating numerous acts of violence from far right extremists, leaderless resistance is an oppositional strategy allowing for, and encouraging, individuals, or small “cells” of lone actors, to perpetrate acts of vio-

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<sup>4</sup> Theodore Kaczynski, “Industrial Society and Its Future” *The Washington Post*, September 19, 1995, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/longterm/unabomber/manifesto.text.htm>, accessed December 10, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Ron Arnold, (1997), “Ecoterror: The Violent Agenda to Save Nature, the World of the Unabomber,” Bellevue, WA: Free Enterprise Press.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Chase p.21 (See note 3); Robert Graysmith, (1997), “Unabomber: A Desire to Kill,” Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Chase p.22 (See note 3).

lence independently of any leadership hierarchy or support network.<sup>10</sup> However, since its conception, leaderless resistance has also been embraced by individuals adhering to various ideologies (e.g. antigovernment, anti-abortion, animal liberation), including radical environmentalism. Similar to Louis Beam's attempts to stimulate acts of violence from White supremacists, the Unabomber Manifesto represents Kaczynski's attempt to animate like-minded environmental extremists.

Utilizing a framework for examining the rhetoric of violent revolutionary social movements, this study examines the rhetoric contained in the Unabomber Manifesto and demonstrates that the manifesto represents Kaczynski's rhetorical efforts to animate like-minded environmental extremists. The essay demonstrates how Kaczynski rhetorically navigated the wide range of competing worldviews that exist within the larger radical environmentalist movement. The essay concludes by discussing how Kaczynski's manifesto resonated with some radical environmentalists and may have even served as a catalyst for later acts committed by U.S.-based environmental extremists.

## Rhetorical Analysis

The full text of the Unabomber Manifesto with the original section titles (see *Appendix*) and numbering scheme was retrieved from *The Washington Post* website.<sup>11</sup> The author's examination of the manifesto is instructed by Herbert Simons' "rhetorical requirements" approach which appears in his oft-cited essay, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements."<sup>12</sup> Simons' "rhetorical requirements" approach provides a useful framework for examining the rhetoric of violent revolutionary social movements, the sort of movement Kaczynski advocated in his manifesto and the sort embraced by like-minded environmental extremists. Simons argues that social movements, just like more formal entities such as political parties and governments, must fulfill functional requirements.

Simons further explains that the functional needs of a movement create "rhetorical requirements" for the movement's leaders. Simons identifies three rhetorical requirements that leaders of social movements must fulfill: (1) attracting, maintaining, and molding followers into an efficiently organized unit; (2) securing adoption of their ide-

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Joosse, (2007), "Leaderless Resistance and Ideological Inclusion: The Case of the Earth Liberation Front." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 19(3), pp.351-368.

<sup>11</sup> Kaczynski (See note 4). Kaczynski's manifesto is divided into 28 sections. While environmentalism is not referenced in any of the section titles, Kaczynski discussed environmental issues at several points within the manifesto. Within the body (i.e. excluding footnotes) of the manifesto, individual paragraphs are designated by numbers listed in ascending order from 1 to 232. When information from the manifesto is quoted, the paragraph or paragraphs from which the quoted material was taken is cited in the endnotes.

<sup>12</sup> Herbert W. Simons, (1970), "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 56 (1), pp.1-11.

ology by the larger structure (i.e. the established order); and (3) reacting to resistance generated by the larger structure. Simons also points out that inherent conflicts among these requirements result in “rhetorical problems” that must be resolved strategically. He describes these rhetorical strategies as ranging along a continuum from moderate to intermediate to militant, each with its own suitable styles and tactics.

Given Kaczynski’s anti-collectivist sentiment and his history of lone wolfing, it is doubtful that Kaczynski was intentionally seeking to lead a large social movement when he drafted his treatise; it is more plausible that Kaczynski was hoping to animate like-minded environmental extremists. But, regardless of Kaczynski’s intentions, he nevertheless fulfilled the rhetorical requirements of a movement leader when his antitechnology, pro-environment treatise was published. In using Simons’ framework to examine the Unabomber Manifesto, the author demonstrates how Kaczynski attempted to animate like-minded environmental extremists and, consequently, why it is conceivable that like-minded environmental extremists might have been, or could still be, energized by his rhetoric. The author’s analysis shows how Kaczynski fulfilled the rhetorical requirements that were created by the functional needs of a radical environmentalist movement, the problems he faced, and the strategies he adopted to solve these dilemmas.

## Attracting, Maintaining, and Molding Followers

Kaczynski was of the opinion that technology and nature were dichotomous, with technological development representing a social ill and environmental preservation representing the cure. This point is exemplified by the following statement Kaczynski made in the manifesto:

“Nature makes a perfect counter-ideal to technology for several reasons. Nature (that which is outside the power of the system) is the opposite of technology (which seeks to expand indefinitely the power of the system). Most people will agree that nature is beautiful; certainly it has tremendous popular appeal. The radical environmentalists ALREADY hold an ideology that exalts nature and opposes technology To relieve the pressure on nature it is not necessary to create a special kind of social system, it is only necessary to get rid of industrial society..... It will relieve the worst of the pressure on nature so that the scars can begin to heal.”<sup>13</sup>

Thus, for Kaczynski, open opposition to technology was as beneficial to the preservation of the environment as environmentalism itself. What is more, these statements reveal that Kaczynski’s goal in drafting the manifesto was not to create an anti-technology, pro-environment movement, but rather to energize likeminded individuals from within the larger radical environmentalist movement.

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<sup>13</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 184 (See note 4).

Like Simons, Kaczynski realized that the survival and effectiveness of any movement is dependent on followers. Throughout his manifesto, Kaczynski made extensive use of both emotional and rational appeals. In an obvious attempt to garner support for his radical environmentalist agenda, Kaczynski made issue-oriented appeals that he knew would likely strike an emotional chord with readers, such as fears about the loss of basic freedoms and the well-being of future generations, particularly their own children. On the issue of freedom, Kaczynski discussed how technological development was increasingly forcing people to function “as parts of an immense social machine”<sup>14</sup> that resulted in a loss of individual autonomy and basic freedoms, including privacy and speech rights. The importance that Kaczynski placed on “autonomy” and being “autonomous” was apparent; at several points within his treatise, he capitalized the words.<sup>15</sup>

To support claims regarding the loss of personal autonomy and freedoms, Kaczynski offered a variety of evidence that had become all too familiar to Americans by 1995: (1) the prevalence of hidden cameras and other surveillance techniques in society, (2) the ease of access to personal information contained in computer data banks, (3) the conglomeration of media resulting in fewer speech opportunities, and (4) the concentration of corporations into fewer and fewer hands resulting in less choice for consumers. Clearly, Kaczynski’s strategy was to begin with a series of emotional appeals, playing to fears and concerns that he believed readers held, then try to substantiate those emotions with a series of rational appeals, offering verifiable evidence of the seemingly negative effects that technology had imposed on society.

Kaczynski used a similar approach when discussing the well-being of future generations. Commenting on the effects that technology would have on humans, he wrote, “The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race”<sup>16</sup> and “threats to the modern individual tend to be MAN- MADE.”<sup>17</sup> To support such assertions, Kaczynski once again offered a variety of verifiable evidence, such as “ozone depletion,” “greenhouse effect,” and “nuclear proliferation.”<sup>18</sup>

In an apparent attempt to create a sense of shared identity between himself and other like-minded environmental extremists, Kaczynski made frequent use of the terms “we,” “us,” and “our” when referring to individuals who opposed technology and the environmental devastation it caused.<sup>19</sup> Alternatively, Kaczynski frequently used the term

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<sup>14</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 41 (See note 4).

<sup>15</sup> Kaczynski wrote his manifesto on an old-fashioned typewriter that did not allow him to italicize or boldface words.

<sup>16</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 1 (See note 4).

<sup>17</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 69 (See note 4).

<sup>18</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 169 (See note 4). Kaczynski also discussed how he believed increasingly liberal (“leftist”) attitudes regarding the personal acquisition of consumer goods, coupled with higher population densities, were wreaking havoc on the environment. In essence, Kaczynski believed consumer demand for products had grown beyond environmental sustainability levels.

<sup>19</sup> Kaczynski’s use of “we,” “us,” and “our” could have also been intended to convince authorities he represented an actual multi-person group.

“they” when referring to persons with an opposite worldview in which technology is embraced. When referring to adherents to his radical environmentalist agenda, Kaczynski also frequently used “FC,” letters which authorities would later learn were an acronym for “Freedom Club.”<sup>20</sup> At one point, Kaczynski even suggested that adherents to his radical environmentalist ideology were more intelligent than non-adherents, a further attempt to create a sense of shared identity in “us-versus-them” terms.

In an effort to organize FC into an efficient unit, Kaczynski first established what form of action he believed the movement needed to embrace. Early in the manifesto Kaczynski wrote, “We . . . advocate a revolution against the industrial system.”<sup>21</sup> Kaczynski did not view technological reform as a possibility; he viewed revolution as the only alternative. What is more, Kaczynski contended that the longer this revolution was delayed “the more disastrous the results.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, Kaczynski attempted to instill a sense of urgency in those readers who may have lent credence to his revolutionary rhetoric.

In a further effort to define FC’s agenda, Kaczynski wrote, “we do outline in a very general way the measures that those who hate the industrial system should take in order to prepare the way for a revolution against that form of society.”<sup>23</sup> Kaczynski also established that FC’s goal was “not to be a POLITICAL revolution,” that its objective was “to overthrow not governments but the economic and technological basis of the present society.”<sup>24</sup> However, Kaczynski was not opposed to insurrection against governments, per se; Kaczynski did endorse a decision to target governments to the extent that those governments supported the “industrial- technological system.”<sup>25</sup>

## Securing Adoption of the Ideology by the Larger Structure

Simons points out that the “product of any movement is its ideology, particularly its program for change,” and the revolutionary rhetorician will insist that a significant renewal of values by the larger structure is necessary to provide harmony and stability.<sup>26</sup> In his manifesto, Kaczynski provided like-minded environmental extremists with a strategy for securing adoption of FC’s radical environmentalist ideology by the larger

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<sup>20</sup> Bron Taylor, (1998), “Religion, Violence and Radical Environmentalism: From Earth First! to the Unabomber Manifesto to the Earth Liberation Front,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 10(4), pp:1-42. Kaczynski inscribed “FC” on some of his bombs.

<sup>21</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 4 (See note 4).

<sup>22</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 3 (See note 4).

<sup>23</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 4 (See note 4).

<sup>24</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 4 (See note 4).

<sup>25</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 2 (See note 4).

<sup>26</sup> Simons, p.4 (See note 10).



structure. Perhaps the most important strategy Kaczynski developed for FC is revealed in the following statement:

“[T]wo tasks confront those who hate the servitude to which the industrial system is reducing the human race. First, we must work to heighten the social stresses within the system so as to increase the likelihood that it will break down or be weakened sufficiently so that a revolution against it becomes possible. Second, it is necessary to develop and propagate an ideology that opposes technology and the industrial society if and when the system becomes sufficiently weakened.”<sup>27</sup>

Kaczynski believed continual attacks on the industrial-technological system were vital for an environmental revolution. Assuming a radical environmentalist movement was successful in the initial task of sufficiently weakening the industrial-technological system, the success of the revolution would then only hinge on the movement’s ability to propagate an anti-technology, pro-environment ideology that might be adopted by the larger structure.

In discussing how FC should go about getting others to accept its worldview, Kaczynski wrote, “an ideology, in order to gain enthusiastic support . . . must be FOR something as well as AGAINST something. The positive ideal we propose is Nature.”<sup>28</sup> Kaczynski later stated, “the ideology should be propagated in a simplified form that will enable the unthinking majority to see the conflict of technology vs. nature in unambiguous terms.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, Kaczynski indicated that FC’s ability to articulate its ideology with complete clarity was essential for securing adoption of its radical environmentalist ideology by the larger structure.

Kaczynski also discussed what sort of adherents he believed FC should focus attention on while spreading its radical ideology, when he wrote:

“The revolutionary ideology should therefore be developed on two levels. . . the ideology should address itself to people who are intelligent, thoughtful and rational. The object should be to create a core of people who will be opposed to the industrial system on a rational, thought-out basis, with full appreciation of the problems and ambiguities involved, and of the price that has to be paid for getting rid of the system.”<sup>30</sup>

Next, Kaczynski suggested that the effectiveness of FC’s efforts to secure adoption of its radical environmentalist ideology by the larger structure should not be measured strictly in terms of how many people were motivated to act out in support of its cause.

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<sup>27</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 166 (See note 4).

<sup>28</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 183 (See note 4).

<sup>29</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 188 (See note 4).

<sup>30</sup> Kaczynski, paragraphs 186-187 (See note 4).

While FC's ability to advance its revolution ultimately hinged on compelling at least some individuals to commit physical acts, Kaczynski conceded that the majority of people only needed to be aware of its radical environmentalist ideology. Following from earlier statements, Kaczynski wrote:

“Until the time comes for the final push toward revolution . . . the task of revolutionaries will be less to win the shallow support of the majority than to build a small core of deeply committed people. As for the majority, it will be enough to make them aware of the existence of the new ideology and remind them of it frequently . . .”<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Kaczynski believed that FC would be more effective in securing adoption of its radical ideology by the larger structure by simply spreading its message to a majority of people. Of course, Kaczynski's demands for the *Times* and the *Post* to publish his manifesto represented his own efforts to spread a radical environmentalist message to the general public, a goal he achieved quite successfully when considering the readership of the two papers and the widespread online availability of the treatise.<sup>32</sup>

## Reacting to Resistance from the Larger Structure

Simons points out that the larger structure may respond to a movement in one of two ways. On one hand, the larger structure may be “too kind” to a movement by appointing an entity to “investigate the issue,” disarming the movement by accurately predicting its demands and acting on some of them, or some other seemingly positive response that produces little, if any, progress for the movement.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, the larger structure may be too restrictive to a movement by, among other tactics, refusing to negotiate with the movement or carry its message in the mass media.<sup>34</sup> Believing that the larger structure would be too restrictive in its response to FC's radical environmentalist efforts, Kaczynski drafted his treatise accordingly.

Kaczynski suggested, both implicitly and explicitly, that like-minded environmental extremists should react violently to any potential resistance from the larger structure. Implicit in Kaczynski's writings is that FC should react to any potential resistance from the larger structure with enough violence to weaken the industrial-technological system, a strategy repeatedly referenced in the manifesto. Within his treatise, Kaczynski discussed “FC's violent methods” and the history of violence in the United States and abroad. In many instances, Kaczynski suggested that violence was a justifiable response to oppressive conditions imposed by power-elites. For example, in discussing

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<sup>31</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 189 (See note 4).

<sup>32</sup> If that were not enough, Kaczynski's manifesto is available in book form through several libraries.

<sup>33</sup> Simons, p.4 (See note 10).

<sup>34</sup> Simons, p.4 (See note 10).

a fictional power struggle between a “weak” and a “strong” member of society, Kaczynski wrote, “The only sensible alternative for the weaker man is to kill the strong one while he has the chance. In the same way, while the industrial system is sick we must destroy it.”<sup>35</sup> Although he speculated that FC “may or may not make use of violence,”<sup>36</sup> Kaczynski believed that violent tactics were ultimately the most effective means to its success when opposed by the larger structure.

In other instances, Kaczynski explicitly stated this. For example, Kaczynski made explicit his belief that violence was more effective than non-violence when he wrote, “If we had never done anything violent and had submitted the present writings to a publisher, they probably would not have been accepted.”<sup>37</sup> In fact, Kaczynski went so far as to state that murder was an acceptable response to resistance by the larger structure when he later stated, “In order to get our message before the public with some chance of making a lasting impression, we’ve had to kill people.”<sup>38</sup> Of course, this is exactly what Kaczynski did during his bombing campaign, and why the *Times* and the *Post* gave in to his demands to publish his manifesto. After all, both papers, as well as other elements of the larger structure (e.g. law enforcement), were keenly aware that resistance to the Unabomber’s demands to publish his radical environmentalist ideology were likely to be met with more violence. What is more, the very publication of the Unabomber Manifesto in the *Times* and the *Post* demonstrated how effective the use of violence would be in getting a radical environmentalist message publicized to a mass audience.

## “Rhetorical Problems” and “Rhetorical Strategies”

Simons points out that while the social movement leader needs to fulfill all three rhetorical requirements, inherent conflicts frequently exist among those requirements, creating “rhetorical problems” that need to be resolved by the leader.<sup>39</sup> Inherent conflicts among Kaczynski’s rhetorical requirements resulted in two “rhetorical problems” that complicated his attempts to guide FC’s radical environmentalist efforts: (1) how the movement was supposed to spread its message to a mass audience without using the very technologies the movement opposes and (2) how the movement was to avoid alienating the mass of potential followers who utilized the technologies the movement sought to eliminate.

Kaczynski made direct reference to the first inherent conflict when he wrote, “they [revolutionaries] will be tempted to use technology as a tool for reaching that other goal. If they give in to that temptation, they will fall right back into the technological

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<sup>35</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 135 (See note 4).

<sup>36</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 4 (See note 4).

<sup>37</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 96 (See note 4).

<sup>38</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 96 (See note 4).

<sup>39</sup> Simons, pp.4-7 (See note 10).

trap.”<sup>40</sup> At the same time, however, Kaczynski realized that like-minded environmental extremists needed to use some technologies if they hoped to disseminate their message to a wide audience. Kaczynski attempted to resolve this inherent conflict when he later wrote:

“It would be hopeless for revolutionaries to try to attack the system without using SOME modern technology. If nothing else they must use the communications media to spread their message. But they should use modern technology for only ONE purpose: to attack the technological system.”<sup>41</sup>

Kaczynski’s resolution of this conflict was relatively simple. He indicated that technology use was a necessary evil that, if limited to the single purpose of harming the technological system, must be permitted if the radical environmentalist movement hoped to spread its message to a mass audience.

With regard to how FC was to avoid alienating prospective adherents who utilized the technologies the movement sought to eliminate, Kaczynski attempted to resolve it strategically by suggesting that the movement should focus its efforts only on those in control of the technology:

“As a matter of strategy one should generally avoid blaming the public ... other conflicts tend to distract attention from the important conflicts (between power-elite and ordinary people, between technology and nature) ... Generally speaking, one should encourage only those social conflicts that can be fitted into the framework of the conflicts of power-elite vs. ordinary people, technology vs. nature.”<sup>42</sup>

Kaczynski suggested that FC should not direct its aggression toward ordinary citizens who used technology because that approach would have been counterproductive to the movement’s objectives. In Kaczynski’s view, FC would be more effectively served by stopping technological development at its “power-elite” source and allowing society to see the benefits created by a technology-free environment, rather than by attempting to convince “ordinary” people to do away with their technologies.

Simons points out that individuals seeking to lead social movements often find themselves having to navigate through an intricate web of conflicting rhetorical demands that must be resolved strategically.<sup>43</sup> The movement leader may employ a moderate, intermediate, or militant type of strategy.<sup>44</sup> The strategy of the moderate is one of peaceful persuasion, whereas the strategy of the militant is to use rhetoric as an expression, a tool, and an act of force.<sup>45</sup> Although his general rhetorical style was more

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<sup>40</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 200 (See note 4).

<sup>41</sup> Kaczynski, paragraph 202 (See note 4).

<sup>42</sup> Kaczynski, paragraphs 190-191 (See note 4).

<sup>43</sup> Simons, p.7 (See note 10).

<sup>44</sup> Simons, p.7 (See note 10).

<sup>45</sup> Simons, p.8 (See note 10).

militant, Kaczynski adopted an intermediate strategy that combined moderate and militant messages when faced with rhetorical dilemmas involving technology.

Individuals unaware of the conflicting demands imposed on movement leaders may well perceive the adoption of an intermediate rhetorical strategy by a person attempting to lead a radical environmentalist movement as oxymoronic, especially when considering the violence that Kaczynski perpetrated during his eco-terrorist bombing campaign. However, as Simons points out, contemporary social movements, when viewed broadly, all seem to require combinations of moderate and militant rhetorical strategies.<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusion

In adopting an intermediate rhetorical strategy, Kaczynski's rhetoric resonates with a wider universe of radical environmentalists. Bridging the myriad of ideological divides existing within the radical environmentalist movement has been a principal rhetorical problem facing the movement's leaders. Given that Kaczynski managed to bridge this divide, if only partially, it certainly warrants examination. Using Herbert Simons' "rhetorical requirements" approach for examining the rhetoric of violently revolutionary social movements, the author demonstrated how the Unabomber Manifesto represented a rhetorical effort by Ted Kaczynski to animate like-minded environmental extremists he referred to as FC, an acronym for Freedom Club. The examination demonstrated that Kaczynski fulfilled Simons' three rhetorical requirements for social movement leaders by (1) attempting to attract/maintain/mold FC into an efficiently organized unit (e.g. emotional and logical appeals, sense of urgency, sense of shared identity, the revolutionary form of action needed); (2) instructing FC on how to secure adoption of their ideology by the larger structure (e.g. continual attacks on the industrial-technological system, a "for-and-against" ideology propagated in a simplified form); and (3) suggesting to FC that it should react violently to resistance generated by the larger structure. The examination also revealed how Kaczynski attempted to strategically resolve "rhetorical problems" that were created by these rhetorical requirements by adopting an intermediate strategy that combined moderate and militant messages.

Kaczynski's manifesto clearly represented his rhetorical efforts to animate like-minded environmental extremists. Believing that he was in allegiance with other radical environmentalists, Kaczynski sought not only to fortify their convictions but also to guide their actions through his manifesto. Kaczynski's rhetorical efforts were consistent with some of his earlier writings. Prior to his demands that the *Times* and the *Post* publish his manifesto, Kaczynski drafted letters to *Earth First!* and other radical environmentalist groups regarding his strategy for destroying the industrial-technological system.<sup>47</sup> During a search of Kaczynski's cabin following his arrest, FBI investigators

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<sup>46</sup> Simons, p.11 (See note 10).

<sup>47</sup> Chase p.77 (See note 3).

discovered carbon copies of letters Kaczynski had written to *Earth First!* in an overt attempt to enlist the group as an ally.<sup>48</sup> One of the letters discovered was entitled “Suggestions for Earth Firsters! from FC.”<sup>49</sup> Also, investigation revealed that Kaczynski drew upon radical environmentalist literature during his bombing campaign, even using it to select two of his victims.<sup>50</sup> This discovery as well as Kaczynski’s efforts to communicate with *Earth First!* indicate that the group’s radical environmentalist rhetoric struck a responsive chord with him.

Just as the rhetoric of *Earth First!* resonates with various radical environmentalists, including a lone wolf like Kaczynski, the rhetoric in Kaczynski’s manifesto has also resonated with various radical environmentalists. Because Kaczynski referenced ideals common to the larger radical environmentalist movement and utilized an intermediate rhetorical strategy, his manifesto likely resonated with a wider universe of radical environmentalists. Indeed, there is some evidence to support that Kaczynski’s revolutionary rhetoric resonated with environmental extremists in the United States.

Despite his deadly tactics, Kaczynski had, and perhaps still has, a number of sympathizers within the radical environmentalist movement.<sup>51</sup> In 1997, the year following Kaczynski’s apprehension, an anonymously-produced flyer reading “Free Ted Kaczynski” was distributed at the Earth First! Rendezvous by a long-term radical environmentalist movement participant.<sup>52</sup> The back side of the flyer read, in part, “It may be that the Unabomber will be looked upon ... as a kind of warrior-prophet ... Return to Wild Nature - Destroy the Worldwide Industrial System.”<sup>53</sup>

Some individuals within the radical environmentalist movement have even employed tactics that resemble those endorsed by Kaczynski in his manifesto. For example, after comparing Kaczynski’s revolutionary rhetoric with subsequent eco-terrorist acts committed by individuals linked with the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), several parallels exist. To begin, Kaczynski’s militant, pro-environment rhetoric is reflected in the violent eco-terrorist attacks committed by ELF cells in the United States. The year following the manifesto’s publication, ELF cells committed various large-scale acts of eco-terrorism, including multiple arsons and a variety of other destructive attacks against property, facilities, and housing developments.<sup>54</sup> What is more, the persistence of the eco-terrorist attacks perpetrated by individuals linked with the ELF is reflective of Kaczynski’s assertion that a radical environmentalist movement must wage

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Taylor p.2 (See note 20).

<sup>51</sup> Taylor p.7 (See note 20).

<sup>52</sup> Taylor p.7-8, 35 (See note 20).

<sup>53</sup> Taylor p.35 (See note 20).

<sup>54</sup> Michael Loadenthal, (2014), “Eco-Terrorism? Countering Dominant Narratives of Securitisation: A Critical, Quantitative History of the Earth Liberation Front (1996-2009),” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 8(3), pp:16-50.

continual attacks against the industrial-technological system in order to achieve its environmental objectives.

The views that Kaczynski espoused in his manifesto are also reflected in some targets of eco-terrorism perpetrated by ELF cells in the United States. Mirroring Kaczynski's call to violence, ELF cells have committed attacks on construction sites, luxury retreats, developments in rural areas, facilities used for genetically engineering trees and crops, as well as equipment and/or properties used by a variety of corporations and government agencies that the group perceives to be environmentally-unfriendly. Moreover, the tactic of attacking large, costly facilities, including the upscale residences of individuals deemed to be assisting in environmental degradation, parallels Kaczynski's strategy of perpetrating violence against powerelites, the entities he argued were most capable of supporting wide-scale environmentally-harmful activities.

Additionally, the guidelines Kaczynski established for propagating an ideology are reflected in how some ELF cells and sympathizers propagate radical environmentalist ideology. In some instances, ELF cells have attempted to propagate their ideology through the use of an unambiguous slogan (i.e. "If you build it, we will burn it."), an approach that echoes Kaczynski's recommendation that environmental extremists should propagate their ideology in a simplified form. ELF sympathizers have also attempted to spread a radical environmentalist message to a wider audience through the media of mass communication, particularly the Internet, an approach Kaczynski endorsed with the provision that it was done with the exclusive aim of harming the technological system.

In examining the rhetorical nature of the Unabomber Manifesto, the present article provides further insight into what motivates environmental extremists of today, and perhaps this study serves to assist society in guarding against future acts of eco-terrorism. Given its availability online, the radical environmentalist rhetoric contained within Kaczynski's manifesto has become available to an even wider audience than when it was first published. If the manifesto's anti-technology, pro-environment rhetoric resonated with environmental extremists in the past, like-minded individuals may view the essay as a guide for their eco-terrorist activities in the future. Future studies should examine the role that other rhetorical artifacts, especially those employing intermediate rhetorical strategies, may play in bringing radical environmentalists from various ideological perspectives together for a common cause. With environmental extremists and a host of other deeply committed issue-oriented extremists (e.g. anti-abortion, anti-globalization) actively operating in the United States and abroad, examinations of the rhetorical nature of extremist rhetoric are needed now more than ever.

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## **Appendix: Sections of Theodore Kaczynski's “Industrial Society and its Future”**

1. “Introduction”
2. “The Psychology Of Modern Leftism”
3. “Feelings Of Inferiority”
4. “Oversocialization”
5. “The Power Process”
6. “Surrogate Activities”
7. “Autonomy”
8. “Sources Of Social Problems”
9. “Disruption Of The Power Process In Modern Society”
10. “How Some People Adjust”
11. “The Motives Of Scientists”
12. “The Nature Of Freedom”
13. “Some Principles Of History”
14. “Industrial-Technological Society Cannot Be Reformed”
15. “Restriction of Freedom Is Unavoidable In Industrial Society”
16. “The ‘Bad’ Parts Of Technology Cannot Be Separated From The ‘Good’ Parts”
17. “Technology Is A More Powerful Social Force Than The Aspiration for Freedom”
18. “Simpler Social Problems Have Proved Intractable”
19. “Revolution Is Easier Than Reform”
20. “Control Of Human Behavior”
21. “Human Race At A Crossroads”
22. “Human Suffering”
23. “The Future”
24. “Strategy”
25. “Two Kinds Of Technology”
26. “The Danger Of Leftism”
27. “Final Note”
28. “Notes”



The Ted K Archive

A critique of his ideas & actions



Brett A. Barnett

20 Years Later: A Look Back at the Unabomber Manifesto

December 2015

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