

Stop the Machines

**How Emerging Technologies are Fomenting the War on
Civilization**

Mauro Lubrano

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ABSTRACT

The Fourth Industrial Revolution promises to transform contemporary societies. Similarly, emerging technologies are affording countless new applications that assure an overall and widespread improvement of living standards. At the same time, their potential misuse has sparked concerns. In particular, the possibility of terrorist organizations adopting such technologies has dominated the scholarly debate. Consequently, there is a growing literature that deals with the motivational and technical factors potentially underlying the malevolent resort to emerging technologies. Enthusiasm for emerging technologies is, however, only one side of the coin. The last decade has, indeed, witnessed a re-emergence of forms of Neo-Luddism. Nevertheless, a thorough understanding of these developments is still lacking. This paper investigates and maps the main debates and dynamics in the Anti-Technology Movement in order to understand the rationale behind—and the prospects of—this resurgence. In doing so, it focuses on two radical fringes, namely the Insurrectionary Anarchist Milieu and the Radical Environmentalist Milieu. The paper argues that, although based on different narratives and end goals, these milieus share a similar commitment and operational approaches as well as a marked apocalyptic millenarian thinking that has set them on an escalatory path.

KEYWORDS

Emerging technologies; insurrectionary anarchism; radical environmentalism; anti-technology; Neo-Luddism

Introduction

Technologies represent a crucial variable in conflicts. Indeed, they invariably affect and/or determine the strategic and tactical choices of the parties involved. Additionally, major technological breakthroughs can potentially lead to a fundamental reshaping of the conflicts and their dynamics. From the discovery of bronze around 3500–3000 BCE to the development of nuclear weapons, there are countless examples of major technological innovations that profoundly impact how conflicts are fought. The same applies to conflicts involving terrorist organizations. The very birth of modern terrorism coincided approximately with the discovery of dynamite in 1867.¹ Similarly, in the following decades, terrorists adopted several then-emerging technologies, ranging from automatic firearms to the Internet.² Enthusiasm for emerging technologies is, however, only one side of the coin. Episodes of technophobia and violent antagonism towards new technologies date as back as the nineteenth century, while, more recently, Theodore

¹ See Audrey K. Cronin, *Power to the People: How Open Technological Innovation Is Arming Tomorrow's Terrorists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 61–93.

² For a comprehensive account, see *ibid.*

Kaczynski —aka the Unabomber—has raised this issue again.³ A Neo-Luddite *ante litteram*,⁴ Kaczynski waged a one-man war against technologies and civilization from 1978 to 1996 and is generally deemed a highly influential and inspiring figure in the Anti-Technology Movement (ATM).⁵ Nowadays, a new generation of Neo-Luddites has taken the Unabomber’s baton. Despite the recent re-emergence of forms of antagonism towards technologies, a thorough understanding of these developments is still lacking. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to investigate and map the main debates as well as the dynamics that characterize the anti-technology milieu in order to understand the rationale behind, and the prospects of, this resurgence.

To do so, the paper compares the two radical fringes of the ATM, namely the Radical Environmentalist Milieus (REM) and the Insurrectionary Anarchist Milieu (IAM). This study finds that, while presenting different narratives and end goals, these two milieus exhibit analogous operational characteristics and patterns while sharing a similar commitment when it comes to destroying the techno-industrial civilization. Moreover, they both display a strong component of apocalyptic millenarian thinking and appear to be bound to escalate their commitment to political violence in the short term.

On technological determinism and informed speculations: The literature on terrorism and emerging technologies

There is wide consensus that the world is currently experiencing a Fourth Industrial Revolution.⁶ This revolution, which is based on a confluence of technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, the Internet of Things, Additive Manufacturing, etc. promises to affect all aspects of society.⁷ Conflicts represent no exception; in fact, these emerging technologies have already begun to transform them. As a result, a scholarly debate on the consequences these technologies will have on the future of inter-state warfare has already emerged.⁸ Similarly, there are increasing studies

³ Theodore F. Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery: The Collected Writings of Theodore J. Kaczynski, a.k.a. “The Unabomber”* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2008); Theodore F. Kaczynski, *Anti-Tech Revolution: Why and How* (Scottsdale, AZ: Fitch & Madison Publishers, 2015).

⁴ Neo-Luddism emerged from the anti-globalization movement in the early 1990s. See Steven E. Jones, *Against Technology: From the Luddites to Neo-Luddism* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 23.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 216–25.

⁶ Wesley Doorsamy, Babu Sena Paul, and Tshilidzi Marwala, eds., *The Disruptive Fourth Industrial Revolution: Technology, Society and Beyond*, vol. 674, Lecture Notes in Electrical Engineering (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), vii, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48230-5>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ See, e.g., Michael C. Horowitz, “When Speed Kills: Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems, Deterrence and Stability,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 42, no. 6 (September 19, 2019): 764–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144217X.2019.1661111>.

investigating the impact these technological innovations will have on terrorist organizations and other violent non-state actors. These studies include both motivational and technical factors potentially underlying and/or encouraging terrorists' malevolent resort to emerging technologies. One of the main arguments put forward is that these technologies will increase terrorist organizations' capabilities in mobilization, power projection, and command and control.⁹ Moreover, resorting to these technologies is expected to be widespread, as they will be cheap, accessible, transportable, multiuse, and concealable.¹⁰ So far, terrorist organizations have adopted a few of these technologies. Unmanned aerial vehicles—or drones—represent a good example in this regard and different studies have, indeed, demonstrated how terrorists have employed this technology for different purposes, including attacks against hard targets, targeted assassinations, and propaganda.¹¹ The fact that non-state actors have used drones more than any other recently emerged technology is not surprising. Indeed, drones have now become a commercial off-the-shelf item, making it technically imprecise to consider them as emerging technology. Nonetheless, terrorists' resort to new technologies has been mostly limited to drones—albeit not exclusively. For example, the 2019 Halle synagogue shooting was allegedly carried out with a homemade weapon fashioned with 3D-printed components.¹² What emerges here is a limited number of empirical cases that involve the use—or attempted use—of emerging technologies. It follows that a large portion of the literature on terrorism and emerging technologies has a rather speculative character. For example, recent publications on this issue include, *inter alia*, studies on the hypothetical implications that emerging technologies will have on Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) terrorism¹³ or the potential

/doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2019.1621174; James Johnson, "Delegating Strategic Decision-Making to Machines: Dr. Strangelove Redux?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* (April 30, 2020): 1–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2020.1759038>; Todd S. Sechser, Neil Narang, and Caitlin Talmadge, "Emerging Technologies and Strategic Stability in Peacetime, Crisis, and War," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 42, no. 6 (September 19, 2019): 727–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2019.1626725>.

⁹ Cronin, *Power to the People*, 256–58.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See, e.g., Håvard Haugstvedt and Jan Otto Jacobsen, "Taking Fourth-Generation Warfare to the Skies? An Empirical Exploration of Non-State Actors' Use of Weaponized Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs—'Drones')," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 14, no. 5 (2020): 26–40; Emil Archambault and Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, "Drone Imagery in Islamic State Propaganda: Flying like a State," *International Affairs* 96, no. 4 (July 1, 2020): 955–73, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa014>.

¹² See Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Colin P. Clarke, and Shear Matt, "Terrorists and Technological Innovation" (Lawfare, February 2, 2020), <https://www.lawfareblog.com/terrorists-and-technological-innovation>.

¹³ See, e.g., Gregory D. Koblentz, "Emerging Technologies and the Future of CBRN Terrorism," *The Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (April 2, 2020): 177–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2020.1770969> or Zachary Kallenborn and Philipp C. Bleek, "Swarming Destruction: Drone Swarms and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Weapons," *The Nonproliferation Review* 25, no. 5–6 (September 2, 2018): 523–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700.2018.1546902>.

for radicalization that language generation technologies entail.¹⁴ Even a cursory review of recent terrorist activities would, however, reveal a paucity—if not the outright absence—of such empirical cases. To clarify, saying that these studies have a speculative nature does not imply that they are useless. In fact, these “informed speculations,” based on “limited empirics, deductive logic, and other published analyses” can still have scholarly value while also being useful for policymakers.¹⁵ However, as the scholarly debate focuses mainly on such hypothetical—and catastrophic—scenarios, it runs the risk of neglecting other important developments, such as those occurring within the ATM. Furthermore, another major issue with the scholarship is that it assumes that terrorist organizations will inevitably adopt these new technologies. This technological determinism is an unfortunate and recurrent shortcoming in the debate on the relationship between terrorists and technologies.¹⁶ In fact, there are several examples of terrorist organizations that did not necessarily adopt specific technologies. Various factors can underlie such decisions—e.g., not only material capabilities but also the group’s ideology.¹⁷ Similarly, certain groups might not simply reject or discard specific technologies. Instead, they might go as far as to develop forms of technophobia or technological antagonism, resolving to eradicate both the technologies and their proponents. It is, in other words, this form of Neo-Luddism that the contemporary literature on emerging technologies and terrorism has neglected to the point that there is no actual relevant debate.¹⁸ Indeed, the few studies that have been published on the ATM are embedded in broader discussions on, for example, anarchism, eco-radicalism, or on the Unabomber.¹⁹ However, while a scholarly debate is struggling to take off, the ATM has declared war on the techno-industrial civilization and on emerging tech-

¹⁴ Kris McGuffie and Alex Newhouse, “The Radicalization Risks Of GPT-3 and Advanced Neural Language Models,” (Monterey, CA: Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism, 2020), <https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/academics/centers-initiatives/ctec/ctec-publications-0/radicali>

¹⁵ Kallenborn and Bleek, “Swarming Destruction,” 3.

¹⁶ Gary A. Ackerman, *‘More Bang for the Buck’: Examining the Determinants of Terrorist Adoption of New Weapons Technologies* (London: King’s College, 2014), 9, [https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/more-bang-for-the-buck-examining-the-determinants-of-terrorist-adoption-of-new-weapons-technologies\(992afd2a-bdeb-46b2-8cb7-cd29d77ebd64\).html](https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/more-bang-for-the-buck-examining-the-determinants-of-terrorist-adoption-of-new-weapons-technologies(992afd2a-bdeb-46b2-8cb7-cd29d77ebd64).html).

¹⁷ Ibid., 66; Martha Crenshaw, “Innovation: Decision Points in the Trajectory of Terrorism,” Workshop Report, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect: Preconditions, Causes, and Predictive Indicators (Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, 2010), 46, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=9908>.

¹⁸ The Luddites emerged in the early nineteenth century and waged a sabotage campaign against the technologies that emerged from First Industrial Revolution. See Jones, *Against Technology*, 45–76.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Donald D. Liddick, *Eco-Terrorism: Radical Environmental and Animal Liberation Movements* (London: Praeger, 2006); Michael Loadenthal, *The Politics of Attack: Communiqués and Insurrectionary Violence* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2018); Lawrence E. Likar, *Eco-Warriors, Nihilistic Terrorists, and the Environment* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011); or Uri Gordon, *Anarchism and Political Theory: Contemporary Problems* (Mansfield College. University of Oxford, 2007), https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:7615e18b-7357-4784-8228-5b49253c7650/download_file?file_format=pdf&safe_filename=602332346.pdf&type_of_work=Thesis.

nologies. Moreover, as the next sections will argue, this movement could potentially experience an escalation in violence in the short term. Therefore, needless to say, any attempt at preventing such an escalation warrants an in-depth study of the ATM.

The objective of this paper is to explore the Neo-Luddite—or Anti-Technology—Movement to identify and understand its narratives, trends, and outlook. To do so, this paper carries out a structured, focused comparison of the two major Anti-Technology milieus, namely the Radical Environmentalist Milieu and the Insurrectionary Anarchist Milieu, and of the two most extreme fringes thereof, respectively the Individualists Tending Towards the Wild and the Informal Anarchist Federation. The rationale of the comparative case study methodology stems from the early stage of the research on the ATM. Taking an inductive approach, the structured, focused comparison permits in-depth exploratory and descriptive accounts that, in turn, enable to reach preliminary conclusions as to the narratives, trends, and outlook of the ATM.²⁰

Also, there are two reasons why the paper analyzes the most extreme fringes of Neo-Luddism. Firstly, as this is fundamentally a study on political violence and terrorism, focusing on the extreme fringes allows to recover and analyze the meaning, justification, and the prospect of anti-technology violence. Besides, emphasizing these ends of the spectrum will contribute to singling out each milieu's peculiar characteristics, while also highlighting potential elements of continuity between the two milieus. The case studies rely heavily on primary sources, in particular documents published on the Internet by the organizations themselves or various authors that gravitate towards these extreme fringes.²¹ Including the several personalities within the larger milieus allows to assess how they influence and shape the actions and mindsets of both the clandestine organizations here analyzed.²² Lastly, the paucity of data on the ATM makes triangulation quite challenging. However, resorting to court documents as well as law enforcement reports contributed to testing the reliability of the sources.

Rage against the machines: Antagonistic Neo-Luddism

An important distinction needs to be made before proceeding with analyzing the ATM; namely, the difference between groups that attack and those who want to destroy technologies instead. The crucial difference lies in the fact that groups who attack one or more specific technologies do not necessarily want to eradicate them. Rather,

²⁰ See Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), 67–72.

²¹ Despite being anti-technology, the ATM does resort to the Internet as well as to other technologies—as later sections will elucidate.

²² See the discussion on the milieu approach in Stefan Malthaner and Peter Waldmann, “The Radical Milieu: Conceptualizing the Supportive Social Environment of Terrorist Groups,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37, no. 12 (December 2, 2014): 979–98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2014.962441>.

they target them because it might cause disruption and/or destruction. For instance, terrorists might attack a chemical plant to release large quantities of toxic material.²³ Alternatively, they might target technologies to then use them as weapon systems; for example, the 9/11 hijacking of civilian aircraft or the resort to car bombs. Conversely, what distinguishes the ATM is that it aims to completely eradicate technologies. Violence against machines is a crucial—if not central—component of these groups’ ideologies, which is what makes them Neo-Luddites. However, it goes without saying that to consider all of those who question the utility of technology and who want to reduce or control its impact as Neo-Luddites or, for that matter, as terrorists would be a grave mistake.²⁴ It is only a smaller portion that, after all, actively seeks to bring about the demise of machines and civilization. Arguably, the most famous example of a Neo-Luddite is the Unabomber.

Nowadays, Neo-Luddism finds its most developed expressions in the Radical Environmentalist Milieu and the Insurrectionary Anarchist Milieu. These two milieus are not, however, entirely separate entities. Instead, they constitute a continuum where they oftentimes overlap, becoming thus rather difficult to discern. As such, it would be erroneous to consider the ATM as a compartmentalized, dyadic entity. In fact, its two souls share common tenets and invariably shape and influence each other while still retaining certain peculiar characteristics.²⁵ The next sections will now provide a discussion on the two milieus followed by a case study on their most radical fringes, namely the Informal Anarchist Federation and the Individualists Tending Towards the Wild.

The Insurrectionary Anarchist Milieu: IAM

“To call yourself an anarchist is to invite identification with an unpredictable array of association, an ensemble which is unlikely to mean the same thing to any two people, including any two anarchists.”²⁶ This anarchist author could have not described more eloquently how complex the anarchist universe is. At the very core, anarchists oppose the notion that anyone can be in power. Crucially, they disagree on how the revolution should unfold.²⁷ Similarly, there are diverging opinions on the issue of violence, with only a minority advocating it. This minority, which is based on “an extremist tendency” that “emphasizes the practice of revolutionary insurrection through illegal

²³ See, e.g., Margaret E. Kosal, “Terrorism Targeting Industrial Chemical Facilities: Strategic Motivations and the Implications for U.S. Security,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 1 (January 2007): 41–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100600702006A>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 231.

²⁵ Liddick, *Eco-Terrorism*, 3.

²⁶ Bob Black, “My Anarchism Problem,” 1994, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/bob-black-my-anarcho>.

²⁷ Randy Borum and Chuck Tilby, “Anarchist Direct Actions: A Challenge for Law Enforcement,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 3 (May 2005): 202–03.

and violent ‘direct action,’” constitutes “insurrectionary anarchism.”²⁸ Traditionally a flexible and inclusive milieu, anarchism has increasingly focused on issues about the environment and technologies.²⁹ The inclusion of these issues is directly proportional to the proliferation of ideological currents within the insurrectionary anarchist milieu. Hence, it is nowadays common to hear about green-anarchism, anarcho-primitivism, anarcho-nihilism, anarcho-individualism and so forth. Insurrectionary anarchism has thus become an umbrella term under which all these currents are grouped. Besides anarchism, what these currents have in common is that they typically share a profound distaste for left-wing politics and adopt the Leaderless Resistance.³⁰ Defined as “a strategy of opposition that allows for and encourages individuals or small cells to engage in acts of political violence independent of any hierarchical leadership or network of support,” Leaderless Resistance also allows for a high degree of ideological inclusion, thus preventing cleavages within the movements that adopt it.³¹

Considering the enthusiasm which characterized anarchists’ adoption of dynamite in the nineteenth century, there is a great deal of irony in the fact that contemporary insurrectionary anarchists take an antagonistic stance towards technology.³² Unlike their ancestors, contemporary insurrectionary anarchists believe that technologies are not neutral. Instead, they argue that “the evolution of the machine (...) goes together with the evolution of domination.”³³ Technological development, then, structurally encourages the perpetuation and growth of Western society’s pervasive centralization, rationalization, and competition—embodied in the state and capitalism.³⁴ This is an inevitable and continuous dynamic that ultimately brings further misery and domination onto the exploited masses. Indeed, anarchists believe that each new technological wave has historically further destabilized the lives of the vulnerable, thus perpetuating their subjugation.³⁵ However, the ongoing technological advancements point at a new development: convergence. This convergence will in turn determine the growth of the megamachine—i.e. the sum of all integrated technologies—and “the becoming One of

²⁸ Francesco Marone, “A Profile of the Informal Anarchist Federation in Italy,” *CTC Sentinel* 7, no. 3 (2014): 23.

²⁹ Leonard Williams, “Anarchism Revived,” *New Political Science* 29, no. 3 (September 2007): 300, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07393140701510160>.

³⁰ Alfredo M. Bonanno, *Anarchismus und Aufstand* (Edition Irreversibel, 2014); Alfredo M. Bonanno, *La Gioia Armata* (Catania: Edizioni Anarchismo, 1977), <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alfredo-m-bonanno-armed-joy>; Francesco Marone, “The Rise of Insurrectionary Anarchist Terrorism in Italy,” *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 8, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 196, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17467586.2015.1038288>.

³¹ Paul Joosse, “Leaderless Resistance and Ideological Inclusion: The Case of the Earth Liberation Front,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (July 4, 2007): 352–53.

³² Cronin, *Power to the People*, 61–125.

³³ Anonymous, “Journey Towards the Abyss: Scattered Reflections on the Technoworld.” *Hourriya*, April, 2018, 10.

³⁴ Gordon, “Anarchism and Political Theory: Contemporary Problems,” 261.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 262–63.

all machines and devices.”³⁶ Once the convergence of the different fields of advanced technology is over, anarchists argue that society will have reached the Singularity, i.e. “the point at which machine intelligence surpasses human intelligence” which will determine “the birth of a new totalitarian control regime by humans upon humans (...).”³⁷ There is a great deal of pessimism among anarchists about the prospects of the Singularity, which is predicted to occur around 2045.³⁸ According to more catastrophic scenarios, there will be a war between ideologically opposed groups who will either support the intelligent machines or will pursue their eradication. Significantly, many insurrectionary anarchists believe this war has already begun; it was the Unabomber who dealt the first blow in 1978 as he started his one-man war.³⁹ Thus, the IAM features a strong element of apocalyptic millenarianism that urges action. Several organizations have responded to this call. Among them, the Informal Anarchist Federation (*Federazione Anarchica Informale*—FAI) has arguably expressed the most technology-antagonistic positions, thereby launching several attacks on both technologies and individuals or companies related to them.⁴⁰

The Informal Anarchist Federation: Against the prison-society and the new age of totalitarianism

The FAI is a loose network that emerged in Italy in 2003.⁴¹ Originally consisting of four cells, it has become the most dangerous form of non-Jihadist and domestic threat in Italy as of 2019.⁴² In an open letter that introduced them to the world, the FAI defined itself as a “Federation” because of its widespread horizontal structure that various affinity groups can independently join or leave. Moreover, they self-proclaimed as “Anarchist” because they pursue the destruction of the State and of Capitalism as well as the establishment of a just society with no exploitation of men over men and men over nature. Lastly, the FAI is “Informal” because anarchists “do not believe in vanguards” or in any “enlightened active minority.”⁴³ Additionally, the FAI rests on three operational pillars. The first is solidarity with comrades in prison; this must be expressed in the form of direct actions. Secondly, the FAI activities must be organized in campaigns—any affinity group or individual can launch one provided that the rationale is explained through communiqués which are usually published online. Despite its

³⁶ Anonymous, “Journey Towards the Abyss,” 12. Capitalization in original.

³⁷ 325, “#11,” 2014, 23–24, <https://325.nostate.net/distro/>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 23–25.

⁴⁰ Loadenthal, *The Politics of Attack*, 74–85.

⁴¹ FAI, “Lettera Aperta al Movimento Anarchico ed Anti-Autoritario,” 2003, <https://325.nostate.net/library/escalation1.pdf>.

⁴² SISR, *Relazione Sulla Politica Dell’informazione per La Sicurezza 2019* (Rome: Sistema di Informazione per la Sicurezza della Repubblica, 2020), 95–96, <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/RELAZIONE-ANNUALE-2019-4.pdf>.

⁴³ FAI, “Lettera Aperta.”

anti-technology stance, the FAI does indeed extensively resort to the Internet. Lastly, communication between cells should be primarily performed through direct actions—hence, praxis has precedence over theory.⁴⁴ These direct actions involve tactics such as symbolic and communicative acts of sabotage, arson, and—more recently—bombings and assaults. Historically, the FAI has not aimed at bringing about many casualties, even though many of its members have made arguments for the necessity of lethal operations.⁴⁵ This trend might, however, reverse considering the more recent resort to bombings and assaults.⁴⁶

Throughout the years, the FAI has morphed into an international brand. Indeed, in 2011 the FAI co-launched the International Revolutionary Front (IRF) initiative in concert with the Greek organization, Conspiracy of the Cells of Fire (Συνωμοσία των Πυρήνων της Φωτιάς—CCF).⁴⁷ The idea of an international network of insurrectionary anarchists in Southern Europe had already been championed by Alfredo Maria Bonanno, the main ideologue of insurrectionary anarchism.⁴⁸ The establishment of the IRF led to a progressive internationalization of the FAI. Indeed, only three years after the formation of the IRF, the signature FAI-IRF had already been used to claim responsibility for attacks occurring in Italy, Greece, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Indonesia, Chile, and other countries.⁴⁹

Traditionally, issues that mobilize the FAI-IRF revolve around topics such as the migration crisis, solidarity with imprisoned comrades, the rise of right-wing and nationalist extremism, the Kurdish struggle for autonomy, and the social consequences of economic crises.⁵⁰ The technology issue has emerged violently starting from 2010 when an intense domestic debate started in Italy on whether to resume the country’s nuclear power program. As this debate intensified, the FAI progressively shifted its fo-

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ FAI, “Quattro Anni,” 2007, <http://www.sebbenchesiamodonne.it/quattro-anni-dicembre-2006-documento-i>

⁴⁶ Marone, “The Rise of Insurrectionary Anarchist Terrorism in Italy,” 194.

⁴⁷ Ministero degli Interni, *Relazione sull’Attività delle Forze di Polizia, sullo Stato dell’ordine e della Sicurezza Pubblica e sulla Criminalità Organizzata. Relazione al Parlamento—Anno 2011* (Rome: Italian Ministry of the Interior, 2012), 10, https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/relazione_al_parlamento_ps_2011.pdf.

⁴⁸ Alfredo M. Bonanno, *Internazionale Antiautoritaria Insurrezionalista* (Catania: Edizioni Anarchismo, 2009), <https://www.edizionianarchismo.net/library/alfredo-m-bonanno-internazionale-antiautoritaria-insurrezionalista>.

⁴⁹ Marone, “The Rise of Insurrectionary Anarchist Terrorism in Italy,” 205; EUROPOL, *European Union: Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2014* (The Hague: EUROPOL, 28 May 2014), 35–36, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/>.

⁵⁰ SISR, *Relazione sulla Politica dell’Informazione per la Sicurezza 2015* (Rome: Sistema di Informazione per la Sicurezza della Repubblica, 2016), 71–72, <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/relazione-annuale/relazione-al-parlamento-2015.html>; Ariel Koch, “Trends in Anti-Fascist and Anarchist Recruitment and Mobilization,” *Journal for Deradicalization* 14 (2018): 3; SISR, *Relazione Sulla Politica dell’Informazione per la Sicurezza 2017* (Rome: Sistema di Informazione per la Sicurezza della Repubblica, 2018), 97, <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/relazione-annuale/relazione-al-parlamento-2017.html>.

cus on environmental issues.⁵¹ Then, the 2011 Fukushima incident precipitated events. One of the first attacks against technology companies occurred, indeed, on March 30, 2011—only nineteen days after the Fukushima disaster—when two FAI cells claimed responsibility for several parcel bombs, including one sent to Swissnuclear.⁵² This wave of anti-technology rage did not fade. Indeed, roughly a year later, Alfredo Cospito and Nicola Gai—members of the FAI/IRF Olga Nucleus—kneecapped Roberto Adinolfi, a senior executive of the nuclear engineering group Ansaldo Nucleare in Genoa, Italy.⁵³ This is one of the few occasions when the FAI has deliberately carried out a targeted operation aiming to injure or kill. The broader insurrectionary anarchist movement rejoiced at the news of the Adinolfi attack; the CCF, for example, praised this attack against this “high priest of the new totalitarianism of science and technology imperatives.”⁵⁴ During the trial, the two perpetrators unequivocally stated that Adinolfi was guilty of pursuing and spreading nuclear technology in the world. This action was thus meant to punish him and the techno-industrial world he represented. Moreover, it was supposed to be the first in a series of seven—then thwarted—subsequent actions targeting technology companies specialized in defense and security.⁵⁵ Additionally, the same years saw the FAI starting to develop a nuanced discourse around the issue of emerging technologies. Anarchists started depicting the development of emerging technologies as a project meant to establish the “prison-society” thus permanently enslaving the subaltern classes.⁵⁶ The technology issue became increasingly central for the FAI-IRF in the following years. While they claimed responsibilities for a few attacks against technology companies and critical infrastructure, including a power plant in Indonesia, they also praised the actions of the Individualists Tending Towards the Wild (ITS), thus signaling the crystallization of more radical positions.⁵⁷ The fact that the FAI-IRF was taking a more radical approach is also evident from an interview that Cospito gave in 2014. Besides expressing his support for ITS’s resort to lethal violence, Cospito declared that the destruction of both the techno-industrial system and of civilization had to be the ultimate goal of any anarchist efforts.⁵⁸ Significantly, in advocating for the

⁵¹ SISR, *Relazione sulla Politica dell’informazione per La Sicurezza 2010* (Rome: Sistema di informazione per la Sicurezza della Repubblica, 2011), 57, <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/relazione-annuale/relazione-al-parlament-2010.html>.

⁵² FAI, “‘Do Not Say That We Are Few’—Statement from the Italian FAI,” 2011, https://325.nostate.net/page/287/?lang=en%26vpag=3%26page_number_0=2

⁵³ EUROPOL, *European Union: Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2013* (The Hague: EUROPOL, April 25, 2013), 31, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/te-sat-2013-eu-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report>.

⁵⁴ CCF quoted in Loadenthal, *The Politics of Attack*, 81.

⁵⁵ Maria R. D’Angelo, Sentenza n. 6 del 11 luglio 2014 nel procedimento penale contro Alfredo Cospito e Nicola Gai, No. Verdict N. 6 (Corte d’Assise di Appello di Genova 7 November 2014), 13.

⁵⁶ 325, “#10,” 2012, 8.

⁵⁷ 325, “#11,” 2014, 4–8.

⁵⁸ Alfredo Cospito, “A Few Words of ‘Freedom’ Interview by CCF—Imprisoned Members Cell with Alfredo Cospito,” interview by CCF, July 2014, 8–9 <https://325.nostate.net/2014/12/01/interview-by-ccf-imprisoned-members-cell-with-alfredo-cospito-greece-italy/>.

destruction of civilization, Cospito rejected the early FAI's utopian objective of creating a more just society, thereby signaling the acceptance of a more nihilistic approach to the eradication of the machines. In his words:

A revolution would inevitably create more chains, new authority, new technology, new civilization. An anticiv anarchist can only be a nihilist, for it is in the destruction of society that this new anarchy is being fulfilled (...). To destroy because there is no future in civilization.⁵⁹

Therefore, though originally marginal in the FAI mission, the issue of technologies has progressively surfaced to occupy a central role within its ideology and praxis. Based on the “prison-society” narrative, the FAI-IRF has, indeed, made repeated calls for attacks on companies working on biotechnology, robotics, nanotechnology, etc. Some of these calls have been answered.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, FAI-IRF members have undertaken a discussion on how to more effectively bring the techno-industrial system down. This debate reveals the blatant influence of Kaczynski. In a famous article called “Hit Where It Hurts,” the Unabomber argued that it was necessary to strike where the system would be most vulnerable. “Being electricity the single greatest weakness of the techno-industrial complex, such vulnerability and ideal target was represented by the electric-power industry.”⁶¹ This article was then re-published in Kaczynski's 2015 book.⁶² Unsurprisingly then, the FAI-IRF calls for attacks on the “transnational electrical power transmission” increased as of 2016.⁶³ The FAI-IRF gave substance to these new ideas by striking several relay antennas—including 5G antennas—and cable pits for train signaling.⁶⁴ At the same time, the FAI-IRF has been increasingly demonstrating a renewed interest in bringing about casualties.⁶⁵ According to the Italian chief of police, it is, indeed, only by chance that the FAI has not yet struck.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁰ E.g., on 24 December 2018, members of the FAI-IRF / Immediate Action Group cell have attacked the Italian Technology Institute. EUROPOL, *European Union: Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2019* (The Hague: EUROPOL, June 27, 2019), 57, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2019-te-sat>.

⁶¹ Kaczynski also mentions the communication industry, the computer industry, and the propaganda industry. See Theodore F. Kaczynski, “Hit Where It Hurts,” 2002, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/ted-kaczynski-hit-where-it-hurts.pdf>.

⁶² See Kaczynski, *Anti-Tech Revolution*.

⁶³ Anonymous, “Smarter Prison?—Call for War on the Technology Multinationals,” February 2, 2016.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., attacks against 5G installations in Grenoble (France) in May 2020 and attacks near Florence (Italy) in July 2019. See, respectively, 325, “#12,” 2020, 13 and SISR, *Relazione sulla Politica dell'Informazione per La Sicurezza 2019* (Rome: Sistema di Informazione per la Sicurezza della Repubblica, 2020), 96, <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/RELAZIONE-ANNUALE-2019-4.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Two explosive devices were placed outside a branch of the Norther League party in Treviso (Italy) on August 12, 2018. The first device was allegedly meant to lure authorities into setting off a second device, thus demonstrating the will to harm and/or kill. See SISR, “Relazione 2019,” 96.

⁶⁶ See Marone, “The Rise of Insurrectionary Anarchist Terrorism in Italy,” 205.

Overshadowed by Jihadist and right-wing violence—but also perhaps due to this lack of casualty, the FAI-IRF has rarely been featured in the news and in scholarly articles. Though responsible for numerous attacks, these have mainly resulted in property destruction or damage. However, it is possible to observe the signs of a potential escalatory path in the actions of the FAI-IRF. As technological developments gain momentum and the convergence of the machines approaches at an increasingly faster pace, anarchists feel the Singularity is approaching sooner than originally anticipated. In fact, they believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has provided the techno-elites with the perfect opportunity to tighten their grip on the exploited masses in preparation of the implementation of technological totalitarianism.⁶⁷ The sense of urgency is, therefore, growing. As the technological apocalypse approaches, the FAI might decide to upgrade its commitment to violence which could include resorting to lethal force. As an anonymous anarchist claimed:

*We will try to defend ourselves by waging war and without scruples. And without scruples towards ourselves. Namely, without scruples towards our own deep-rooted and indestructible repugnance for any bloody act which, whatever we might do, will remain indestructible in the future. But this doesn't help us at all. We should overcome this repugnance (emphasis in original).*⁶⁸

The next months and years will be revelatory with respect to this pledge.

Summing up, the IAM's narrative is that technologies are not neutral tools, as they allow and perpetuate the prison-society—i.e., the domination of men over men. Showing a marked apocalyptic millenarian thinking, this milieu believes the final confrontation with this totalitarian project is approaching. The anarchist solution to this scenario is the eradication and destruction of the techno-industrial civilization. Lastly, the Leaderless Resistance characterizes the IAM at the operational level.

The Radical Environmentalist Milieu—REM

The Radical Environmentalist Milieu emerged in the mid-1970s when the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) splintered from the Hunt Saboteur Association.⁶⁹ This milieu soon experienced a proliferation of groupuscules and organizations. Notable examples include, *inter alia*, the the Revolutionary Cells-Animal Liberation Brigades (RALB), Earth First!, and the Earth Liberation Front (ELF).⁷⁰ This is by no means a homogeneous group of organizations; in fact, they display different ideologies as well as

⁶⁷ 325, “#12,” 2020, 17.

⁶⁸ Anonymous, “Journey Towards the Abyss,” 12.

⁶⁹ Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler and Cas Mudde, “Ecoterrorism’: Terrorist Threat or Political Ploy?” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37, no. 7 (July 3, 2014): 590, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2014.913121>.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 591.

distinct stances on several issues, including violence. After all, only a minority within the REM deserves to be labelled terrorists.⁷¹ Groups like the ELF and the ALF have, for example, explicitly advised their members to take all reasonable precautions to avoid endangering human lives. The RALB, instead, rejected this recommendation,⁷² while the Individualist Tending Towards the Wild (ITS) go as far as to advocate indiscriminate lethal violence.⁷³ At the same time, these groups share the common commitment of aiming for the destruction of assets that threaten the environment and its sentient inhabitants.⁷⁴ This commitment derives from deep ecology; an environmentalist philosophy that takes a biocentric perspective and is based on a set of principles that, in a nutshell, posit that human beings are part of a wider community and that all living beings have equal worth regardless of whether they are useful or harmful to other human beings.⁷⁵ According to deep ecology, the problem with the contemporary world is that human interference has become excessive. Thus, only a decrease in the human population can allow human life and cultures as well as nonhuman life to flourish.⁷⁶ Of course, not all those who subscribe to this belief assume it is their responsibility to cause this decrease in the human population. Earth First!, for example, did not actively pursue it, but welcomed natural occurrences—e.g. famines or diseases.⁷⁷ Another shared belief within the REM is that an environmental apocalypse is imminent. Rather than opposing such a scenario, the REM generally believe that the sooner it occurs, the better it is for the planet.⁷⁸ Lastly, just like the IAM, the REM favors the Leaderless Resistance strategy and the resort to direct action,⁷⁹ while also shying away from the “leftist types,” who are considered wannabe revolutionaries that attach themselves to any cause without actually committing to the destruction of the system.⁸⁰ Since groups of the REM take different stances on the issue of violence, this paper will focus on its most extreme fringe, represented by ITS; a group that more than any other in the REM deserves the label of terrorist and for a simple reason: it is a label that they are proud of.⁸¹

⁷¹ Hirsch-Hoefer and Mudde, “Ecoterrorism,” 598–99.

⁷² Jean-Marc Flükiger, “The Radical Animal Liberation Movement: Some Reflections on Its Future,” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 2, no. 2 (2008): 120, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jsr.0.0000>.

⁷³ ITS, “Interviews With ITS,” <http://maldicionecoextremista.altervista.org/entrevistas-con-its/> (accessed October 22, 2020).

⁷⁴ Hirsch-Hoefer and Mudde, “Ecoterrorism,” 592.

⁷⁵ Horacio R. Trujillo, “The Radical Environmentalist Movement,” in *Aptitude for Destruction Volume 2: Case Studies of Organizational Learning in Five Terrorist Groups*, ed. Brian A Jackson (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), 146.

⁷⁶ Liddick, *Eco-Terrorism*, 19–21.

⁷⁷ Andy Price, “Green Anarchism,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*, ed. Carl Levy and Matthew M. Adams (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 289.

⁷⁸ Liddick, *Eco-Terrorism*, 3.

⁷⁹ Hirsch-Hoefer and Mudde, “Ecoterrorism,” 591; Likar, *Eco-Warriors, Nihilistic Terrorists, and the Environment*, 83.

⁸⁰ Kaczynski, *Anti-Tech Revolution*, 125.

⁸¹ ITS, “Interviews With ITS.”

The Individualists Tending Towards the Wild: Vengeance and instinct

Around 2010, Mexico witnessed the sudden emergence of insurrectionary-styled, clandestine networks. Some of these were associated with the FAI or the CCF; for example, The Mexican Fire Cells Conspiracy/FAI which announced its formation on September 15, 2011.⁸² Meanwhile, two domestic networks were also surfacing, the Práxedes G. Guerrero Autonomous Cells for Immediate Revolution and the Individualist Tending Towards the Wild (*Individualistas Tendiendo a lo Salvaje*). While the former soon met its demise, the latter demonstrated more endurance and stood out for its willingness to use indiscriminate lethal force;⁸³ a commitment ITS declared in their first communiqué.⁸⁴ Although ITS has been often associated with the anarchist milieu, they have vehemently rejected this label. Instead, they have declared themselves “an anti-industrial, anti-technological, and anti-civilization group formed by radical environmentalists.”⁸⁵ Thus, ITS has been focusing on the issue of emerging technologies from its very onset. In particular, they have demonstrated a profound hatred for nanotechnology, considered “the furthest advancement that may yet exist in the history of anthropocentric progress.”⁸⁶

Unlike other groups of the REM, ITS exhibits exceptional nihilism. Indeed, they do not aim at bringing about an environmental revolution or at regressing to a pre-industrial society. Instead, they appear completely convinced of the futility of any revolutionary activity as well as of the inevitable defeat they will suffer at the hands of the techno-industrial society. Despite these grim prospects, they claim to “prefer to be defeated in a war against total domination than to remain inert, waiting, passive, or as part of all this.”⁸⁷ ITS does believe in the eventual collapse of the techno-industrial system, but they do not believe they have any part to play in this. The demise of civilization will come either as a result of its own self-destructive tendencies or because of the forces of “Wild Nature.”⁸⁸ If ITS is not interested in unleashing a revolution or in destroying the techno-industrial system, why do they wage a war against it? On the one hand, their immediate objective is to hinder the course of the techno-industrial system.⁸⁹ On the other, the ultimate goal is associated with more atavistic and innate impulses, namely vengeance and instinct. In their own words: “[o]ur greatest goal is to avenge the devastation of the earth, to return even minimally the damage that modern humans have done to natural environments. We do not defend wild nature,

⁸² Loadenthal, *The Politics of Attack*, 83.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ ITS, “Communiqués of ITS-2011-2013.”

⁸⁵ Ibid, 37.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 58.

⁸⁹ ITS, “Interview with Individualists Tending toward the Wild (ITS),” 2014, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/individualists-tending-toward-the-wild-interview-with-indivi>

let us avenge it. We are not environmental heroes, we are indiscriminate terrorists.”⁹⁰ Significantly, ITS considers itself to be a part of nature. Thus, their violence is a response dictated by a survival instinct.⁹¹

Upon embarking on its war against civilization, ITS carried out a series of bombings against the Polytechnic University of the Valley of Mexico in Spring 2011 as well as against the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education in August of the same year.⁹² Three months later, ITS carried out their first lethal operation against Ernesto Méndez Salinas, a researcher in the Biotechnology Institute at the National Autonomous University of Mexico.⁹³ This firm and unshakeable determination to murder scientists and researchers involved in the development of emerging technologies makes ITS a rather unique organization in the ATM—paralleled perhaps only by the Unabomber himself.⁹⁴ After all, ITS admitted to having been influenced by Kaczynski.⁹⁵

Despite taking a rather radical stance from their inception, it did not take long for ITS to morph into an even more radical organization. Indeed, “[a]fter a little more than three years of criminal-terrorist activity, the group (...) begins a new phase in this open war against the Technoindustrial System (...).”⁹⁶ With this announcement, ITS revealed in 2014 that various groups had joined them and that they had, therefore, decided to disband ITS and form a broader network called Wild Reaction (*Reacción Salvaje*—RS). This transformation appears to have worked along the same lines as the ones that led to the emergence of the FAI in Italy in 2003. However, the RS experiment was very brief, as it ended a year later. From the ashes of RS, however, ITS was born again in 2016.⁹⁷ Both elements of continuity and discontinuity exist between the pre- and post-RS ITS. For example, the newly emerged ITS still rejects the label of revolutionaries, anarchists, and primitivists. Similarly, they still hold universities, schools, and research centers as the “key pieces for the development of the technological, scientific and industrial system, academies from which the minds of young people blind by modernity, and accomplices of the destruction of Wild Nature.”⁹⁸ At the

⁹⁰ ITS, “Interviews With ITS,” <http://maldicionecoextremista.altervista.org/entrevistas-con-its/> (accessed October 22, 2020).

⁹¹ Wild Reaction, “The Communiques of Wild Reaction,” 2014, 5, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/wild-reaction-the-communiques-of-wild-reaction>.

⁹² Leigh Phillips, “Armed Resistance: Nature Assesses the Aftermath of a Series of Nanotechnology-lab Bombings in Mexico and Asks How the Country Became a Target of Eco-Anarchists,” *Nature* 488, no. 7413 (2012): 576.

⁹³ 325, “#11,” 2014, 25; Loadenthal, *The Politics of Attack*, 82.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁹⁵ “Without a doubt, we see this person as an individual who (...) contributed greatly to the advance of anti-technological ideas,” ITS, “Communiques of ITS-2011-2013,” 35.

⁹⁶ Wild Reaction, “The Communiques of Wild Reaction,” 3.

⁹⁷ Communiqué 1, January 25th, 2016. ITS, “Communiques of ITS-2016-2020,” http://maldicionecoextremista.altervista.org/tag/comunicados-de-its/?doing_wp_cron=1603557556.415560 (accessed October 22, 2020).

⁹⁸ ITS, Communiqué 7, March 9th, 2016.

same time, they broke with some of their previous characteristics, thereby signaling a more radical stance. Although impossible to state with certainty, it is likely that the post-RS ITS is comprised of a new generation of radical environmentalists that “have thrown away the rationalism and scientism that characterized us in our first statements.”⁹⁹ Furthermore, they distanced themselves from those previously revered, such as Kaczynski,¹⁰⁰ or from organizations they had previously supported, such as FAI-IRF.¹⁰¹ Moreover, as of 2016, ITS took on an international dimension with their signature being used to claim attacks in Chile and Argentina¹⁰² and, two years later, in Greece. A further concerning development, the post-RS ITS has also become more indiscriminate. While they had previously targeted individuals involved in the research and development of emerging technologies, they now claimed responsibility for an increasing number of victims that appear to have been randomly selected, including two hikers and a student.¹⁰³ ITS justification for this new, indiscriminate violence is straightforward: ITS are part of nature and nature’s “reactions are violent, nature does not stop at all in front of the subway lines, in front of urban or rural buildings, it does not stop before ordinary citizens or specialized scientists, it does not stop, it destroys everything at its own pace.”¹⁰⁴ Yet, several of ITS claims—including one involving a murder—turned out to be false and the group has been accused of “seeking to get a free ride on the coattails of a tragedy.”¹⁰⁵ This accusation, which came from anarchist ranks, signaled a growing cleavage between ITS and the broader ATM. It should not come as a surprise, then, that when asked to share his opinion on ITS, John Zernan—an important ideologue of anarcho-primitivism—called them an (eco)fascist organization.¹⁰⁶ Kaczynski has similarly expressed contempt when he accused ITS of having an understanding of revolutions that “is at a kindergarten level” and of having completely misread his works. However, according to the Unabomber, their gravest mistake is that “they express, and therefore promote, an attitude of hopelessness about the possibility of eliminating the technological system.”¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, ITS appears to be immune to critiques. Even when accused of fomenting a rape culture and misogyny, they simply replied that they “don’t care if people rape, murder, kill, commit infanticide, etc.” and that misogyny was simply not a thing, as “eco-extremists hate all humans

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ ITS, Communiqué 1, January 25th, 2016.

¹⁰¹ ITS, Communiqué 26, March 19th, 2017.

¹⁰² See ITS, Communiqués 3, February 18th, 2016, and ITS, Communiqués 4, February 25th, 2016.

¹⁰³ ITS, Communiqué 26, March 19th, 2017; Communiqué 42, October 30, 2017.

¹⁰⁴ ITS, Communiqué 1, January 25th, 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Scott Campbell, “There’s Nothing Anarchist About Eco-Fascism: A Condemnation Of ITS,” 2017, <https://325.nostate.net/2017/05/13/theres-nothing-anarchist-about-eco-fascism-a-condemnation-of-its/>

¹⁰⁶ Alexander Reid Ross and Emmi Bevensee, “Confronting the Rise of Eco-Fascism Means Grappling with Complex Systems,” CARR Research Insight (London, U.K.: Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right, March 2020), 23.

¹⁰⁷ Kaczynski, “Ted Kaczynski on Individualists Tending Toward Savagery (ITS),” 2017, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/ted-kaczynski-ted-kaczynski-on-individualists-tending-toward>

equally, and attack on that basis.”¹⁰⁸ The nihilistic tendency within ITS appears, thus, to have become stronger throughout the years.

Recently, ITS has expressed satisfaction for the COVID-19 pandemic, stating that this “is a scenario that we prefer infinitely many times before returning to the normality of the mundane life of the civilized.”¹⁰⁹ According to ITS, such a scenario represents, indeed, a watershed; it is clear to them that “there is a before and an after in the world as we know it and even if it ends up returning to normal, we believe that nothing will ever be the same.”¹¹⁰ Although still convinced of the certainty of their eventual defeat, ITS sees now growing flaws and fractures within the system. Radical Environmentalists can and should take advantage of them to hasten the coming of the “days of Chaos” and the ultimate demise of civilization. Such “[h]ard times do not scare us, in fact, we want them, not only because they open many interesting possibilities for us (and not only for us) but because it is in the middle of the disaster that we find ourselves really comfortable. If the choice is between the normalcy of life in civilized society and barbarism, the choice is clear to us.”¹¹¹ As ITS has previously expressed its belief that the techno-industrial complex will decline because of its own self-destructive tendencies and because of the destructive forces of nature, the current pandemic has provided them with an opportunity to believe that the demise of civilization is near. The (perceived) collapse of civilization might then in turn reinforce the desire to exact revenge on the techno-industrial system.

To sum up, the REM believes that technologies allow the human subjugation of nature. In doing so, technologies will eventually bring about an environmental apocalypse—an event most welcome by the REM. Like the IAM, the REM considers the destruction of the techno-industrial civilization as the only viable path to eradicate this subjugation. Moreover, the REM also adopts the Leaderless Resistance model.

Elements of (dis)continuity within the Anti-Technology Movement

As these case studies have shown, the souls of the ATM present some elements of discontinuity. These disagreements are inherently related to the central tenets of, respectively, deep ecology and anarchism. So, on the one hand, proponents of the REM believe that technologies allow human society to dominate and subjugate nature.¹¹² On the other, anarchists emphasize the men-over-men domination that technologies

¹⁰⁸ Los hijos del Mencho, “Against the World-Builders: Eco-Extremists Respond to Critics,” 2018, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/los-hijos-del-mencho-against-the-world-builders-eco-extremis>

¹⁰⁹ ITS, Communiqué 93, May 10th, 2020, ITS, “Communiqués of ITS-2016-2020.”

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery*, 51. See also Wild Reaction, “The Communiqués of Wild Reaction,” 2014, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/wild-reaction-the-communiques-of-wild-reaction>;

enable,¹¹³ thus allowing a new form of totalitarianism.¹¹⁴ Admittedly, proponents of the IAM acknowledge that emerging technologies—most notably, nanotechnologies—are also increasingly allowing to manipulate nature.¹¹⁵ They do, in other words, express concerns that are similar to those of the REM. However, the more pressing concerns appears to be that “emerging high technologies (...) are solidifying existing power relationships of dominion and will lead to profoundly unimaginable living situations for billions of people.”¹¹⁶ Thus, the main focus lingers on the men-over-men domination. These diverging narratives are reflected in the milieus’ respective apocalyptic millenarian thinking. Indeed, the REM wishes the environmental apocalypse to occur as soon as possible because “the sooner, the better for Earth.”¹¹⁷ Even ITS—despite their defeatism—relish for the perceived imminence of the environmental apocalypse that will end the dominion of men over nature. Conversely, the IAM stresses that the Singularity will bring the elites’ design to completion since it will contribute to “aligning us with the Dominant System before we are even born.”¹¹⁸ Whereas the REM fights for nature, the IAM struggles to attain individual freedom, personal autonomy, thus fighting “against the control and surveillance of the many by the few according to their own agenda.”¹¹⁹ This aspect serves as a strong reminder that the anarchist milieu is usually involved in a multitude of social and political struggles.¹²⁰ Although a crucial issue, technologies do not represent all of the IAM concerns. Thus, it could be said that the IAM displays a form of complementary Neo-Luddism which could alternately emerge as the predominant issue within the milieu. Conversely, the REM displays a form of more absolute Neo-Luddism, which steadily represents the milieu’s main concern.

Nevertheless, the REM and the IAM present several elements of continuity as well. At an operational level, two characteristics connect the two milieus, namely resorting to a Leaderless Resistance (LR) strategy and direct actions.¹²¹ LR groups are, however, not truly and completely leaderless. Many, indeed, feature what Gray calls “ideational oligarchies”; i.e., individuals who provide “ideological inspiration, general and/or specific targets of interest, and perhaps some technical information on planning and actu-

Rik Scarce, *Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement*, Updated ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc, 2006), 12.

¹¹³ Anonymous, “Journey Towards the Abyss,” 9.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 12.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 19.

¹¹⁶ 325, “#11,” 2014, 10.

¹¹⁷ Liddick, *Eco-Terrorism*, 20–21.

¹¹⁸ 325, “#11,” 2014, 30.

¹¹⁹ 325, “#12,” 2020, 17.

¹²⁰ SISR, *Relazione sulla Politica dell’Informazione per la Sicurezza 2015* (Rome: Sistema di Informazione per la Sicurezza della Repubblica, 2016), 71–72, <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/relazione-annuale/relazione-al-parlamento-2015.html>.

¹²¹ See, e.g., Joosse, “Leaderless Resistance and Ideological Inclusion” and Marone, “The Rise of Insurrectionary Anarchist Terrorism in Italy.”

alizing an attack.”¹²² These case studies have identified a few individuals in the ATM who accomplish such a task. Among them, Kaczynski occupies a privileged position. In particular, his *Anti-Tech Revolution: Why and How* represents perhaps the most detailed practical *vademecum* for the anti-technology warrior. It is rather interesting to observe that, while the REM and IAM hold Kaczynski in such high esteem, the Unabomber does not share the same respect for large segments of these two milieus.¹²³ Similarly, Bonanno and Cospito have also played this influential role within the ATM, while other influential profiles are Derreck Jensen and John Zornan.¹²⁴¹²⁵ The point worth emphasizing here is that, despite being a Leaderless Resistance movement, certain figures have a great deal of influence on the ATM. The second operational precept that links the IAM and the REM is, as mentioned, the resort to direct actions. The term “direct action” reflects a do-it-yourself approach¹²⁶ as “every method of immediate warfare by the workers [or other sections of society] against their economic and political oppressors.”¹²⁷ A practice grounded in the concept of propaganda of the deed, direct action has thus become the method of choice of the ATM.¹²⁸

The commonalities between the REM and the IAM are not restricted to the operational domain. Despite their respective multifaceted ideologies, both milieus share some core beliefs. First and foremost, both the REM and the IAM do not believe in the neutrality of technologies—or science for that matter.¹²⁹ Instead, they see science as “an ideological and historical construction” that produces and reproduces social relations while also being fundamental to the development of capitalism.¹³⁰ Similarly, technologies are far more than mere tools. The difference lies in the fact that a tool is a “temporary usage of an element within our immediate surroundings used for a specific task” and that, as such, it does not “involve complex systems that alienate the user from the act.”¹³¹ Instead, “technology is more than wires, silicon, plastic, and steel. It is a complex system involving division of labor, resource extraction, and ex-

¹²² Phillip W. Gray, “Leaderless Resistance, Networked Organization, and Ideological Hegemony,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25, no. 5 (November, 2013): 658, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2012.674077>.

¹²³ Kaczynski, *Anti-Tech Revolution*, 167–68.

¹²⁴ Aric McBay, Lierre Keith, and Derrick Jensen, *Deep Green Resistance: Strategy to Save the Planet* (New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2011).

¹²⁵ John Zernan, *Future Primitive and Other Essays* (New York, NY: Autonomedia, 1994).

¹²⁶ Uri Gordon, “Anarchism Reloaded,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 12, no. 1 (February, 2007): 36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310601095598>.

¹²⁷ Rocker cited in Borum and Tilby, “Anarchist Direct Actions,” 203.

¹²⁸ See, e.g., Williams, “Anarchism Revived” or Hirsch-Hoefler and Mudde, “Ecoterrorism.”

¹²⁹ See John Zernan, *Future Primitive and Other Essays* (New York, NY: Autonomedia, 1994) or Anonymous, “What Is Green Anarchy?” <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-what-is-green-anarchy> (accessed October 22, 2020).

¹³⁰ Anonymous, “Journey Towards the Abyss,” 4–5.

¹³¹ Anonymous, “What Is Green Anarchy?”

ploitation for the benefit of those who implement its process.”¹³² Hence, technologies are the pulsating core of the techno-industrial system. To destroy the techno-industrial system is, therefore, dependent on the destruction of technologies. In this regard, both the REM and the IAM do not distinguish between “good” or “bad” technologies. They consider, instead, technologies as a monolithic conspiracy; a unified system where all parts are dependent on one another—an ensemble that represents the evil that endangers both individual freedom and nature. Only the destruction of the technological system as a whole will eradicate this evil,¹³³ as it is indeed impossible to reform.¹³⁴ As such, antagonistic Neo-Luddites exhibit a rather uncompromising position on this issue. However, there is actually a minimal degree of flexibility. Based on the distinction between tools and technologies, insurrectionary anarchists can tolerate using some form of small-scale technology provided that it does not give rise to systems of control and coercion.¹³⁵ This more flexible posture also serves as a reminder of the above-mentioned distinction between absolute and complementary Neo-Luddism. Moreover, both movements are technology-literate, as they resort to technologies both as a medium and as weapon systems. Indeed, technologies are accepted as long as these are used to destroy the techno-industrial system. Once again, Kaczynski is illuminating for the ATM when he stated that “technology can be used by rebels, too, against the established power-structure. Thus, the importance of revolutionaries of technological competence is therefore evident.”¹³⁶ Additionally, these two milieus share a deep hatred and disgust for left-wing individuals and their focus “on such issues as racism, sexism, neocolonialism, gay rights, animal rights, indigenous people’s rights, etc.” which actually benefit from and reproduce the technological society, rather than opposing it.¹³⁷

Furthermore, the destruction of the techno-industrial civilization constitutes an additional commitment that binds the REM and the IAM. What is, however, civilization? Civilization is defined as the “logic, institutions, and physical apparatus of domestication, control, and domination.”¹³⁸ Its rise— evolving over the past 10,000 years— represents, therefore, the source of all problems affecting the world, namely “warfare, the subjugation of women, population growth, drudge work, concepts of property, entrenched hierarchies, and virtually every known disease, to name a few of its devastating derivatives.”¹³⁹ The eradication of civilization would thus constitute a panacea for both individual freedom and for the planet. It is important to acknowledge that the eventual demise of civilization is perceived as inevitable. Its unsustainability will

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Jones, *Against Technology*, 224–25.

¹³⁴ Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery*.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 104; John Moore, “A Primitivist Primer,” 2009, 10, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/john-moore-a-primitivist-primer>.

¹³⁶ Kaczynski, *Anti-Tech Revolution*, 175. ITS express similar positions. See ITS, “Interviews With ITS.”

¹³⁷ Liddick, *Eco-Terrorism*, 106.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Anonymous, “What Is Green Anarchy?”

provide for its downfall. Though inevitable, this demise might take too long. Thus, there is a widespread sense of urgency characterizing both the IAM and the REM; a burning desire to hasten the downfall of civilization “so as to realize a better world where man will live in harmony with the natural world.”¹⁴⁰ This inescapable element of apocalyptic millenarian thinking, however, does not always translate into an active pursuit of a just new world. Indeed, certain segments of the ATM—like ITS as well as elements within the FAI-IRF—adopt a rather nihilist approach. In doing so, they take different positions. Indeed, fringes of the FAI-IRF argue that a revolution would inevitably create new chains as well as new hierarchies and new power structure, thereby perpetuating the violent and harmful men-over-men domination which constitutes the cornerstone of civilization.¹⁴¹ Therefore, they do not wish to build an alternative society. Rather, they seek the mere destruction of civilization. It is not clear, however, how predominant this view is within the FAI. Conversely, ITS—which perceive itself as part and parcel of the natural world—seeks only to avenge nature and to instinctively react to the damage humans are causing. Lastly, as the next paragraph will argue, both groups—and respective milieus—might soon find themselves on an escalatory path. Before doing so, it is however worthwhile to underscore that the discussion on the elements of (dis)continuity between the REM and the IAM can oftentimes be more academic than factual. Similarly, the case studies discussed in this paper represent the extreme fringes of these milieus. Arguably, as such, they epitomize and emphasize the greatest differences between the two milieus. In reality, anti-technology groups may fall on a spectrum where telling the two milieus apart could be challenging. Having identified and discussed the main trends and narratives, the following paragraph will now assess the ATM’s outlooks and prospect of escalation using Crenshaw’s framework of analysis for the causes of terrorism. This framework distinguishes between—permissive and enabling—preconditions and precipitants.¹⁴² In doing so, the paper will draw a comparison between the FAI’s 2011–12 escalation and the current situation.

The FAI’s 2011–12 escalation, which culminated in the Adinolfi attack, was the product of a series of permissive preconditions. First, Italian authorities had underestimated the FAI for a long time, thus allowing them to thrive relatively unchallenged.¹⁴³ Moreover, the Internet provided them with an environment where they could communicate, exchange ideas, and launch campaigns. Lastly, an environmental narrative—albeit already present—was gaining momentum. The domestic debate on the 2011 nuclear referendum, then, constituted an enabling precondition, as it provided the organization with an opportunity to give a more concrete shape to this emerging narrative. Acting as a precipitant, the 2011 Fukushima accident compelled the FAI to take action which

¹⁴⁰ Liddick, *Eco-Terrorism*, 3.

¹⁴¹ See, *inter alia*, Cospito, “A Few Words of ‘Freedom’”; ITS, “Communiqués of ITS-2011-2013,” <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/individualists-tending-toward-the-wild-communiques>.

¹⁴² Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (July, 1981): 379–99.

¹⁴³ Marone, “The Rise of Insurrectionary Anarchist Terrorism in Italy,” 194.

resulted in the Adinolfi attacks and the progressive centralization of the technology issue.

Nowadays, some of the permissive preconditions that allows the ATM to thrive are unchanged; authorities, analysts, but also scholars are still neglecting the dangerous developments occurring within this extremist movement. Similarly, the Internet still provides a safe haven where anti-tech extremists disseminate both propaganda and detailed instructions on how to wage war against civilization. Relatedly, there is an increasing number of influential and inspiring figures—the “ideational oligarchy”—that could function as magnets for potential recruits. At the same time, a set of new enabling preconditions has surfaced. First, the emergence of mass movements, like the Fridays for Future movement, demanding governments to take action against the imminent climate disasters could exacerbate the ATM’s radical positions. As discussed, indeed, both the REM and the IAM hold a grudge against those left-wing movements whose mobilization and activism eventually reinforce the techno-industrial system, instead of destroying it. Moreover, the ATM displays a strong apocalyptic millenarian thinking. Both milieus feel thus compelled to persevere with violence in preparation for the imminent apocalypse. The COVID-19 pandemic, then, has reinforced this commitment in two different ways. While the IAM believes it is providing elites with an opportunity to accelerate the implementation of a new totalitarianism, the REM views it as an additional sign of the impending environmental collapse. Both interpretations are contributing to an upgrade in the ATM efforts. What could then precipitate events and actualize this escalation? Precipitants are, by definition, difficult to predict. However, the above analyses allow to narrow down the possibilities. As both the REM and IAM believe in an impending technological and/or environmental apocalypse, it is thus reasonable to expect they will be waiting for developments to interpret as signs of its imminence. While the COVID-19 pandemic is partly fulfilling this role, major environmental disasters and/or major technology-related events might further catalyze violence. Constant monitoring of these milieus’ online and clandestine activities, along with a deeper understanding of their narratives, *modus operandi*, and dynamics, will be crucial to spot the signs of this likely escalation.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to identify and understand the narratives, trends, and outlook of the Anti-Technology Movement. The paper found that the REM and IAM are based on different narratives. Whereas the former emphasizes the human subjugation of nature and the imminent ecological collapse, the latter focuses on the men-over-men domination and the new totalitarianism of the prison-society. Nevertheless, they share a similar commitment—the eradication of the techno-industrial civilization—and operational approach—the adoption of the Leaderless Resistance model. Also, despite the difference between the IAM complementary and the REM

absolute Neo-Luddite perspectives, they both display a marked apocalyptic millenarian thinking that has set them on a path to escalation. Lastly, the paper discussed how the current COVID-19 pandemic could precipitate this escalation, as it fits in the apocalyptic millenarian mindset of both milieus.

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Notes on contributor

Mauro Lubrano is a PhD Candidate at the Handa Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV) at the University of St Andrews. His research project investigates the processes of strategic innovation in terrorist organizations and, by carrying out a comparative study of three historical organizations (PIRA, ETA, and Red Brigades), aims at understanding the rationale, dynamics, and the unfolding of these processes. His research interests also include the relationship between terrorism and technology, left-wing and insurrectionary anarchist terrorism, and terrorists' international connections—especially during the Cold War.

ORCID

Mauro Lubrano orcid.org

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Author Affiliation: Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence
(CSTPV), School of International Relations, University of St Andrews, Arts Faculty
Building, The Scores, St Andrews, KY16 9AX Scotland, UK

Author's Contact: ml260@st-andrews.ac.uk
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