# On the margins of terrorist propaganda

## Individualities Tending Toward Wildness (ITS) and the non-persuasive communication of ecoextremism

Manuel R. Torres-Soriano

30 Apr 2026

# Contents

**ABSTRACT**

This article examines the propaganda of the eco-extremist terrorist group Individualities Tending Toward Wildness (ITS) from a qualitative perspective. Unlike the classic paradigm that conceives of terrorism as a form of strategic communication aimed at mobilizing audiences or negotiating demands, ITS is characterized by the use of non-persuasive propaganda, which rejects any aspiration to convince or recruit. Its discourse is marked by nihilism, misanthropy, and contempt for any political framework. Through a chronological analysis of all propaganda documents published between 2011 and 2020, we demonstrate how the group uses violence and words to assert an identity antithetical to civilization. This form of expressive terrorism poses a challenge to radicalization prevention models.

**KEYWORDS**

Anti-technological violence; performative terrorism; radicalization; propaganda; nihilism; eco-extremism

In the field of terrorism studies, propaganda has traditionally been understood as a central instrument of the terrorist repertoire. Through it, terrorist actors seek to persuade, mobilize, and recruit supporters, while intimidating their enemies and disseminating their ideological demands. This instrumental conception – which understands terrorism as a form of "communicative violence" aimed at influencing an audience – has dominated academic literature for decades (Matusitz, 2012, 2013; Nacos, 2016; Schmid & de Graaf, 1982). Although this approach is valid for explaining the strategic logic of the vast majority of terrorist organizations, past and present, it is also possible to find cases that go beyond this explanatory model: actors who do not use communication to build their legitimacy and persuade, but rather use it primarily as a mechanism of visceral expression, provocation, or ritual self-affirmation (Matusitz, 2012).

This article focuses on one such extreme case: the eco-extremist group Individualities Tending Toward Wildness (Individualidades Tendiendo a lo Salvaje (ITS) in Spanish), which emerged in Mexico in 2011 and was active until the following decade. Unlike other radical organizations with which it shares a certain thematic repertoire (radical environmentalism, criticism of technology, insurrectionalism), ITS's approach to communication deliberately breaks with persuasive logic. Its propaganda does not seek to gain followers or convince the public of the legitimacy of its cause. On the contrary, its statements reject any redemptive horizon, pride themselves on being hated by everyone, and glorify a total misanthropy. Violence, in its discourse, is not a means to transform society, but an end in itself: an expressive statement against human civilization: "We attacked because we wanted to … to satisfy our selfish instincts to attack" (ITS, 2014a).

This approach profoundly challenges the classic categories of political terrorism. In ITS and its propaganda environment – made up of magazines, blogs, manifestos, and compilations of texts – we find a use of propaganda that operates in a nihilistic way: not to mobilize, but to stage hatred; not to build consensus, but to consolidate an identity that is the enemy of all society.

This article does not aim to generalize its findings to broader categories of terrorist organizations. Instead, it adopts an *extreme case* approach (Flyvbjerg, 2006), focusing on a group whose atypical characteristics help challenge conventional assumptions within terrorism studies. Although ITS is a highly specific and unique actor, the value of analyzing such outliers lies in their ability to expose the limitations of dominant explanatory models.

The choice of this object of study is particularly important in the context of contemporary strategies for preventing violent radicalization. Most current approaches – both academic and institutional – are based on the premise that extremism can be countered through alternative

narratives, counter-narratives, intercultural dialogue, or early intervention on ideological content (Neumann, 2013; Schmid, 2014; Treacy et al., 2024). However, ITS and other similar groups pose a theoretical and operational challenge that renders many of the classic tools for preventing violent extremism ineffective. It is not possible to "delegitimize" a cause in the eyes of its followers if the cause is the absolute rejection of any social group and the followers pride themselves on being hated. Furthermore, these nihilistic terrorists often operate in small cells or as lone attackers, blurring the line between political terrorism and homicides motivated by personal grudges. Analyzing this kind of non-persuasive propaganda involves rethinking current frameworks and recognizing other emerging forms of extremism that do not seek political mobilization but rather destructive self-affirmation.

ITS must be understood within a specific genealogy of anti-technological extremism. It builds upon Michael Loadenthal's framework (Loadenthal, 2017), which identifies their communiqués as "explanatory frames" that infuse meaning into acts of violence within rhizomatic, leaderless networks. Furthermore, it engages with Mauro Lubrano's thesis (Lubrano, 2025) that this phenomenon is a reaction to the Anthropocene, driven by an apocalyptic millenarian mindset that views technology as an all-encompassing "mega-machine".

Based on a qualitative analysis of a large documentary corpus comprising all the propaganda produced by this group between 2011 and 2020, this study traces the evolution of ITS discourse from its anti-technological origins to its consolidation as a misanthropic terrorist cult. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the understanding of contemporary forms of expressive violence, where terrorism no longer pursues instrumental ends but embodies an absolute hatred that deactivates the classic routes of discursive containment.

## The nihilistic exception

The academic literature leaves little doubt about the instrumental and strategic nature of terrorist communication (Harmon & Bowdish, 2018). It is understood that communication is inherent to terrorism: without a propaganda component directed at a broader audience, violent acts would lose their political impact (de la Corte Ibáñez, 2006; Reinares, 1998). Extremist organizations need to develop and disseminate justificatory narratives with two main goals: to gain legitimacy or support among a community and to send an intimidating message to their enemies. The terrorist message attempts to present itself as rationally or morally justified to certain listeners, framing violence as a necessary means to a higher end.

Although this model can be applied to the vast majority of modern terrorist organizations, the literature identifies a minority variant of a terrorist nature. Nihilistic, characterized by a lack of constructive or revolutionary political goals. Rather than articulating a utopia or program for change, these groups embrace destruction as an end in itself. Nihilistic extremism explicitly rejects any aspiration to build a different future, limiting itself to denying and destroying the status quo (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2025). Historically, the term "nihilistic terrorism" was applied to certain nineteenth-century radicals who advocated the total demolition of the established order without a clear plan for the day after (Shaya, 2010).

Traditional propaganda theory (Ellul, 1965; Jowett & O'Donnell, 2018) presupposes an audience to be influenced. However, the propaganda of these groups deliberately refuses to allow their message to be received by anyone. This notion connects with Sloterdijk's concept of "cyni-

cal reason" (Sloterdijk, 2010), where propaganda is used not to convert the unconvinced, but to express contempt for the very possibility of persuasion. Communication becomes a "simulacrum" of propaganda, adopting its form but stripping it of its traditional purpose. The primary function of "performative propaganda" (Butler, 1997; Debord, 1967) is to represent or interpret the group's worldview. Each act of communication by these actors constitutes an end in itself (Austin, 1962).

Nihilistic terrorism represents a break with persuasive logic. Its violence tends to be expressive rather than instrumental: it communicates rage, contempt, or despair, but does not seek to convince the masses of a viable political project (Juergensmeyer, 2017). Propaganda thus becomes a self-referential monologue, driven by the need to satisfy an internal emotional need (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2025). Ideology loses importance in the face of aesthetics: the image of the "misanthropic murderer" (his clothing, his symbols, his posthumous manifesto) without concern for political justifications.

These nihilistic motivations find their main manifestation today on the "accelerationist" far right (Kriner et al., 2024): groups proclaim that there is no political solution and that the only way forward is to precipitate the total collapse of society through chaos and indiscriminate violence. In their propaganda, accelerationists spread manifestos and extremely violent images more to celebrate destruction than to present demands. This propagandistic use of terror primarily as an aesthetic incitement to hatred and anomie. Some studies (Lubrano, 2025) also point to an element of anti-humanism in these currents: they embrace misanthropic and mystical ideas about the purity of Nature, combining them with racism and authoritarianism. Although eco-fascism has a political horizon (an eco-authoritarian order after eliminating the "weak"), in practice many of its adherents end up acting alone or in small groups, prioritizing expressive violence (attacks against minorities, immigrants, or "destroyers of the Earth") over building a broad movement.

In short, in terrorism studies, more and more attention is beginning to be paid to terrorist violence without a coherent political project. "Post-political" violent actors whose actions don't fit into traditional categories. These individuals sometimes adopt rhetoric from various currents in a deeply cynical and contradictory discourse. This lack of coherence doesn't prevent them from publishing long diatribes after their attacks, in which they rationalize their misanthropy and desire for destruction.

While this article focuses on communicative dimensions, it is worth noting that expressive violence has also been examined through psychological and criminological lenses that offer complementary insights. Forensic psychology has identified shared traits between certain terrorists and mass shooters, including pathological narcissism, suicidal ideation, and desire for notoriety (Lankford, 2014; Meloy & Gill, 2016). Criminological research emphasizes how lone-actor terrorism often blurs boundaries between political violence and personal grievance (Corner et al., 2016; Hamm & Spaaij, 2017). These perspectives illuminate individual-level motivations and mental health factors that may predispose actors towards expressive violence.

The particularity of groups like ITS lies not solely in individual pathologies, but in the collective construction of an ideological framework that ritualizes misanthropy as a political stance. Unlike isolated acts of personal violence, ITS produces systematic propaganda that transcends individual acts and constructs a coherent group identity. This communicative dimension – the deliberate crafting of non-persuasive discourse as collective self-expression – requires specific analysis within terrorism studies. Our focus is thus on propaganda as social practice rather than on psychological profiles of individual actors.

## Methodology and sources of information

The research was based on a descriptive analysis of a comprehensive corpus of propaganda documents produced by Individualities Tending Toward the Wildness (ITS) and its eco-extremist milieu. Both official ITS publications (compilations of communiqués, theoretical essays) and related materials (journals and pamphlets from related groups or English/Portuguese translations) were collected. All this material is hosted in the so-called "Eco-extremist Library" on the "Enemy of Every Society" website, which serves as a repository for the propaganda production of ITS and its ideological milieu (Enemy of Every Society, n.d.).

Although the fragmented and decentralized nature of eco-extremist publishing complicates the delineation of a definitive corpus, the five compilations analyzed here collectively offer the most exhaustive repository of ITS propaganda to date. These anthologies were curated by editors linked to the ITS orbit itself and have circulated across the movement's digital channels with explicit endorsement. In addition, cross-referencing these compilations with individual communiqués retrieved from the "Enemy of Every Society" archive and other affiliated sites revealed significant overlap and continuity, suggesting that these collections encompass virtually all known texts issued by the group and its splinter cells between 2011 and 2020. While the possibility of minor omissions cannot be ruled out, the selected corpus offers a comprehensive and representative sample for examining the ideological development and discursive patterns of ITS.

**Table 1.** Materials that make up the ITS propaganda corpus.

| Publication | Dates | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Harmful Words (No. 1–No. 10) | 2011–2016 | Compilation of statements, reflections and texts related to ITS |
| Mictlanxochitl (No. 1–5) | 2016–2019 | Compilation of ITS and RS press releases and editorials |
| Eco-extremist Reflections (No. 1–4) | 2016–2018 | Theoretical and essay journal on eco-extremism |
| Regression Magazine (No. 1–5) | 2015–2019 | Theoretical-propaganda magazine with articles, press releases and reviews |
| Other documents ("Dialogues Beyond Reason", "Surviving Civilization", etc.) | 2017–2020 | 18 monographic texts, pamphlets and manifestos with an eco-extremist tendency |

ITS's primary means of dissemination has been online blogs, generally hosted on anonymous, temporary platforms. In its early years, it used sites like "Instinto Salvaje" (Wild Instinct) (Instinto Salvaje, n.d.) and "Último Reducto Salvaje" (Last Wild Stronghold) (Último Reducto Salvaje, n.d.) (linked to the insurrectionary anarchist scene) to publish statements and reflections. A turning point came in 2016 with the creation of the blog Maldición Eco-Extremista (Eco-Extremist Curse) (Maldición Eco-Extremista, 2016), which became the group's central propaganda organ. On this blog, accessible but constantly migrating between servers, ITS published extensive manifestos, demands from cells located in various countries, and self-organized interviews.

The corpus analyzed (see Table 1) consists of the numbered communiqués published by the group (at least 100 issues compiled in "Palabras Nocivas" and "Mictlanxochitl"), complemented by half a dozen essay collections ("Reflexiones") and related publications ("Atassa", "Anhangá", "Ajajema"). Over the years, the proportion of explicit propaganda in open-access media on the internet increased compared to internally distributed communiqués.

A striking feature of ITS propaganda is the multiplication of names of the cells that sign their communiqués. Rather than always presenting themselves as a single, unified group, ITS often attributes each attack to a distinct cell with a distinct (often bombastic or esoteric) name: "Lynx Fury Occult Group," "Mother Nature's Curse," "Pagan Mountain Sect," "Wild Constellations," "Mystic Forest Horde," "Vengeful Inquisitor Band," etc. This "ghost cell" tactic serves several purposes: it complicates intelligence work (which cannot determine whether they are real entities or simply aliases), gives the impression of a broad movement with multiple adherents, and allows ITS to claim responsibility for various incidents. In its global communiqués, it often compiles messages supposedly written by these cells in different countries, presenting itself as a kind of decentralized federation of eco-extremists (see Figure 1).

To analyze this propaganda corpus, the article adopted a qualitative approach based on the methodology of inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This allows us to identify patterns of meaning in the texts without applying predetermined categories. This methodology is especially useful for examining non-normative discourses such as that of ITS, as it facilitates the detection of discursive axes directly from the analyzed material. This approach has allowed us not only to identify recurring patterns but also to track the evolution of these themes over time.

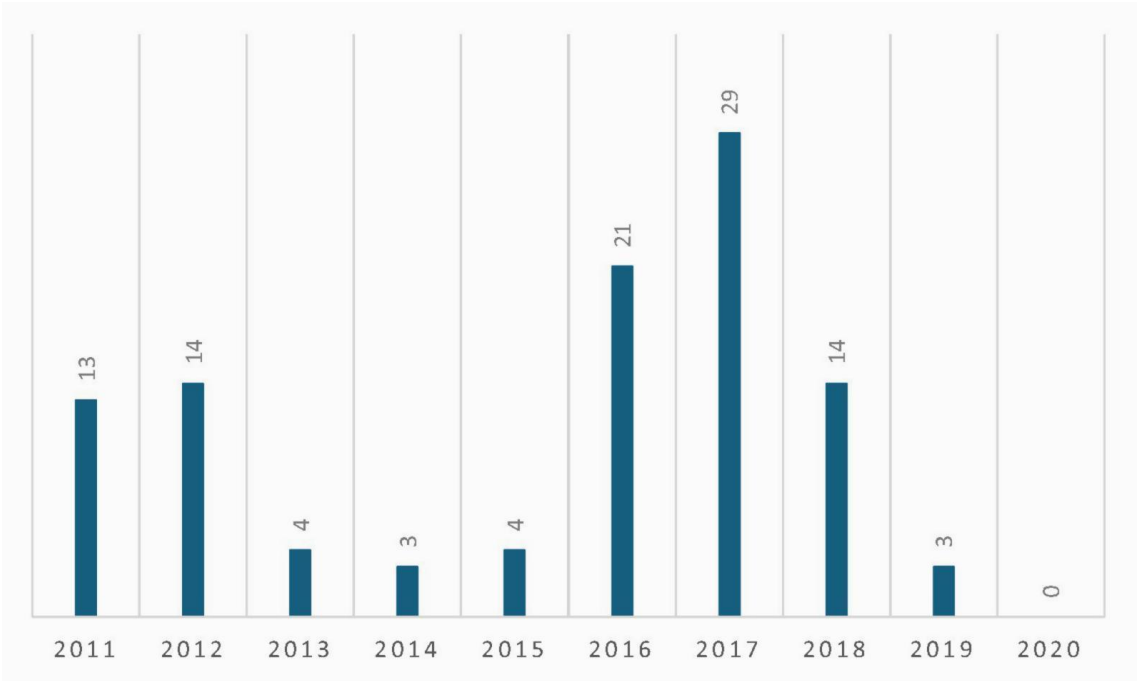


**Figure 1.** Number of communications published per year by ITS.

## ITS and the emergence of eco-extremism in Latin America

The emergence of ITS in Mexico must be situated within the country's specific socio-political conjuncture of the 2000s and 2010s. The militarization of security policy initiated in 2006 under President Felipe Calderón – deploying armed forces against drug cartels – generated catastrophic levels of violence, with official estimates exceeding 60,000 deaths by 2012 and some independent calculations reaching 100,000 (Heinle et al., 2018). This militarization created a cultural environment saturated with images of extreme violence – executions, torture, disappearances – normalizing brutality in public discourse and fostering nihilistic narratives about Mexico's future (Kloppe-Santamaría, 2020). Simultaneously, neoliberal extractivism intensified: mega-mining concessions, industrial deforestation, and urban expansion into indigenous territories accelerated environmental destruction while displacing vulnerable communities (Tetreault et al., 2012). These processes unfolded against the backdrop of Mexico's historical anarchist and radical leftist traditions, which by 2011 had been largely institutionalized or fragmented through repression and co-optation (Ayala, 2018; Rodríguez, 2013). Mexico's universities – particularly UNAM – provided networks where anti-systemic ideologies circulated. ITS emerged within this conjuncture: normalized violence, environmental devastation, political disillusionment, and accessible radical intellectual traditions.

The historical reconstruction offered in this section draws upon both primary eco-extremist texts and existing secondary analyses that have systematized the evolution of ITS and its affiliations. Notably, works such as *The Politics of Attack* have mapped these trajectories in the broader context of insurrectionary violence (Loadenthal, 2017). These sources provide crucial insight into the decentralized and fluid nature of eco-extremist networks in Latin America.

ITS became known through its claim of attacks against scientists and technologists with the supposed objective of "halting the advance of the techno-industrial system" (Phillips, 2012). While this new group could be placed in the orbit of eco-terrorism or primitivist anarchism, from its beginnings it showed a certain ideological originality since it also drew from sources outside that extremist tradition, as is the case with philosophers such as Jacques Ellul and the technophobic terrorist Theodore Kaczynski (Fleming, 2024; Illades & Mondragón, 2023). In interviews with its members, they have steadfastly denied being anarchists or wanting to "liberate" anyone (Ayala, 2018). Unlike traditional eco-radical groups that sought to change environmental practices or raise awareness, ITS did not propose a utopian scenario behind violence, only the absolute denial of the present. The group identifies itself as a terrorist entity – and in its statements, it glorifies indiscriminate violence against civilization and human life. There is no liberating rhetoric or promises of future salvation in its messages; on the contrary, its discourse is openly nihilistic and anti-humanist: "War against civilization, the human race, and progress!" (ITS, 2017a). The group uses language that denotes a radical misanthropy – human beings (especially modern civilized human beings) are worthless and the absolute enemy.

ITS's communication has taken the form of a series of semi-clandestine communiqués and publications, both in Spanish and translated into other languages. In these texts, ITS combines mystical-primitivist references with the glorification of violent acts: "We understand that people want to kill us. They should want to kill us, because you are our enemies, and we don't even like ourselves" (BioBioChile Investigaciones, 2017). Far from seeking sympathy, they assume the role of the villain. This is a key feature of their communication strategy: provocation and moral challenge rather than persuasion.

ITS has been strongly criticized even from the fringes of traditional extremism. Many anarchists and insurrectionists – who in principle share a critique of techno-industrial civilization – reject ITS for its nihilistic and amoral bias, especially after the attacks that sought to generate random civilian casualties. This lack of external support or legitimacy reinforces the idea that its communication does not seek support but rather targets a very small circle (potential individual imitators) or simply serves to express its hatred. In fact, ITS has publicly praised acts of misanthropic violence committed by individuals outside its organization. Thus, for example, they applauded the murders committed by Mark Conditt through the mailing of parcel bombs in Austin, Texas (Collins & Plohetski, 2018), demonstrating that its support base can be anyone who kills out of contempt for society, regardless of ideology.

In its early years, ITS credited the notorious eco-terrorist Ted Kaczynski as its primary inspiration. Like the Unabomber, they began by attacking university professors of nanotechnology and science in Mexico, replicating the tactic of sending letter bombs to academic institutions. However, this ideological affinity was short-lived: other primitivist and neo-Luddite movements criticized ITS for its indiscriminate approach, and Kaczynski even sent the group a letter in 2012, rejecting its "naive" revolutionary vision and poor understanding of the history of social movements (Kaczynski, 2017). Over time, ITS adopted even more extremist tenets, moving away from classical anarchist ideology and embracing absolute nihilism. Rather than seeking a "revolution" against the technological system, the group leaned towards a misanthropic stance that justifies the annihilation of civilized human life for its own sake. His later publications abound in references to "chaos" and the total rejection of all humanist morality, celebrating the destruction of civilization as an end in itself.

An important dynamic in the evolution of ITS's communicative trajectory was the explicit rupture with insurrectionary anarchist currents and the public backlash that followed. Beginning around 2016, various actors within the anarchist counter-information sphere launched sustained efforts to discredit ITS, denouncing its misanthropy, nihilism, and rejection of political struggle (Contramadriz, 2018; Edelweiss Pirates, 2017; Individualist Network, 2018; Los hijos del Mencho, 2018; Voz Como Arma, 2017). These critiques, which circulated through blogs, communiqués, and internal debates, played a key role in delegitimizing ITS within radical milieus that had initially echoed or tolerated its discourse. The resulting subcultural schism led to the group's increasing isolation, as major counter-info platforms withdrew support and dissociated themselves from eco-extremist positions. This erosion of its resonance within adjacent ideological communities likely contributed to the hardened, self-referential posture evident in ITS's later texts.

In 2014, the group announced its merger with a dozen small, pro-indigenous eco-anarchist groups, forming an alliance called Wild Reaction (Reacción Salvaje (RS) in Spanish). This phase incorporated anti-colonial and neopagan rhetoric, attributing Western colonization to the root of ecological ills and championing "indigenous" values of communion with the "wild Earth." However, Wild Reaction was short-lived (approximately a year). After its dissolution, ITS resumed its original name, but with an even more violent and dark discourse: its communiqués, written in cryptic tones and rich in symbolism, glorified indiscriminate violence and featured mystical allusions. This neopagan and nihilistic imagery reflects the blend of influences that characterized the group: from radical eco-terrorism and eco-centrism (placing nature above human life), to insurrectionary anarchism and extreme individualism.

ITS's violent history includes numerous attacks and acts of violence claimed by its various "cells" in several countries (see Figure 2). The first action attributed to ITS took place on 27 April

2011, when a package bomb exploded at the Polytechnic University of the Valley of Mexico, seriously injuring an employee. The group claimed responsibility for this attack as the beginning of its terrorist activities. A few months later, ITS planted a bomb inside the Monterrey Institute of Technology for Higher Education. The explosion injured two academics. During 2011, ITS also claimed responsibility for several additional devices.

One trait that quickly characterized the group in Mexico was its tendency to claim responsibility for attacks outside the organization, which has considerably undermined its credibility. For example, in November 2011, ITS claimed to have shot and killed a researcher at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM); however, the police investigation clarified that the crime was the work of common criminals. Mexican authorities have only recognized a few actions as the work of ITS, denying most of the attacks claimed as the work of others. Responsible or as a result of accidental causes.

Following a peak in activity during its founding years, the group experienced a decline in its claims until a surge between 2015 and 2017, coinciding with the proliferation of affiliated cells under the umbrella of its new name, Wild Reaction (RS), and the expansion of its activity to countries such as Chile and Brazil. This peak represented the group's period of greatest visibility and propaganda output. Beginning in 2018, the number of attacks claimed began to decline steadily, although its propaganda activity remained unchanged.

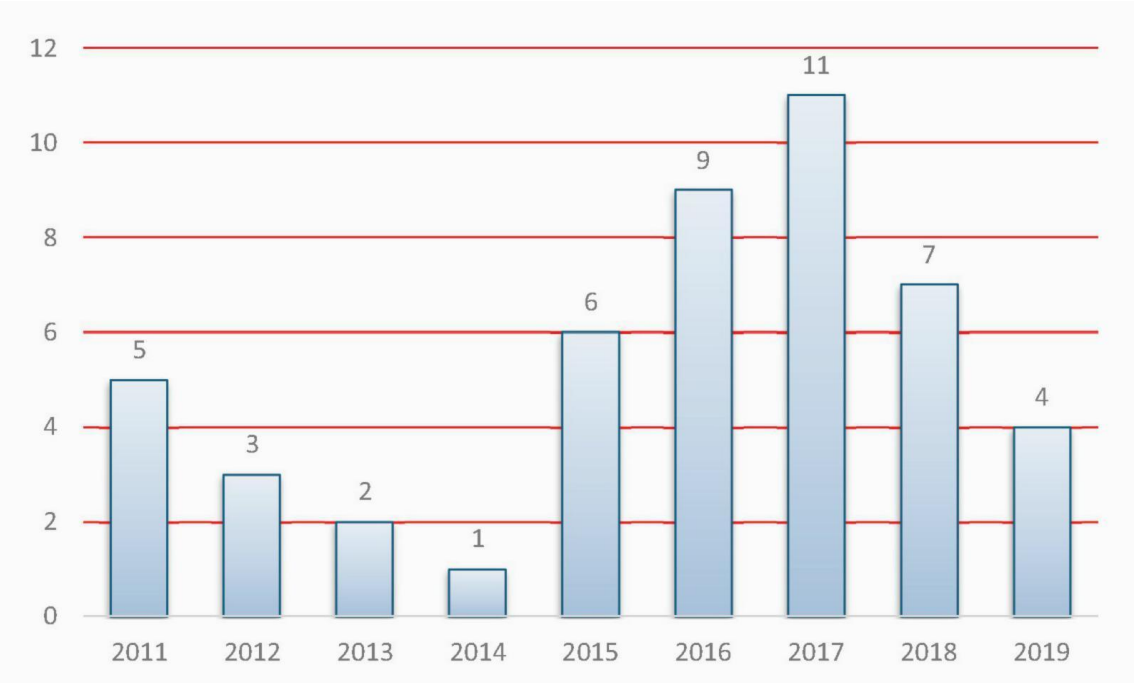


**Figure 2.** Number of attacks claimed per year in ITS/RS propaganda.

A key element in ITS's dissemination has been its relationship with mainstream media, from which it has obtained coverage highly beneficial to its objectives. The group has exploited the sensationalist tendency of certain media outlets, which replicated its statements without rigorous verification, especially in Mexico (Ortigoza Vázquez, 2019). In several of its texts, ITS refers

to journalists as "useful idiots" (ITS, 2018a), alluding to their role in amplifying its message. This strategy allowed it to project an image of disproportionate threat. In this sense, rather than a sophisticated operational machine, ITS operated as a mythomaniac and opportunistic actor, focused on generating media impact.

In the phase that began in August 2014 under the name Wild Reaction, there was a notable increase in statements claiming all kinds of minor sabotage – burning telecommunications antennas, vandalizing urban infrastructure, etc. Between 2016 and 2018, the group continued to claim responsibility for the murder of several people linked to the Mexican university sector. All of these claims were refuted by the authorities. However, by mid-2017, An incident directly linked to the group occurred: a man was seriously injured while picking up a package bomb left in front of a church in Mexico City. Days later, an ITS cell claimed responsibility for this attack against an "indiscriminate target," in keeping with its misanthropic bent. From then on, the group's sights in Mexico expanded beyond scientists: ITS began boasting about randomly damaging civilian targets, such as public transportation, churches, businesses, or simply passers-by – whom they also categorize as part of the "system".

One of the most intriguing aspects of the ITS phenomenon is its aspiration to internationalization. ITS has boasted of having expanded its presence from Mexico to several Latin American and European countries, promoting the idea of a kind of global eco-extremist network. In its statements, ITS frequently declares that it has operational cells in numerous countries. In 2019, it claimed to have a presence in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, the United States, Spain, Greece, and the United Kingdom, and hinted at sympathizers in other countries (BBC Mundo [BBC], 2019). However, there is no evidence of a formal structure formally connecting the various cells that claim the ITS name, beyond the unified propaganda exploitation of all these violent actions.

Through the internet, ITS has succeeded in forming a collective image that other groups could adopt: its combination of eco-fascination with nature and its worship of amorphous violence has the ability to resonate with other nihilistic tendencies. It has even been observed that ITS has cited jihadist or far-right groups in its texts as unexpected sources of tactical inspiration (ITS, 2017b). Ultimately, ITS propaganda serves to promote a kind of international barbarism, where extremists of different stripes could converge in the act of destroying civilization.

## The path to misanthropy

To better contextualize the ideological and aesthetic matrix of ITS, it is important to recognize its proximity to a constellation of authors and traditions associated with individualist anarchism, deep ecology, and nihilism. Although the group frequently rejects direct affiliations, their manifestos are permeated by references – explicit or aesthetic – to figures such as Ted Kaczynski, Max Stirner, and Feral Faun, as well as a broader radical primitivist critique of industrial civilization.

ITS's ideological position reflects selective appropriation and radical distortion of these traditions. They adopt the rejection of moral "spooks" and celebration of egoist desire, but weaponize this into justification for indiscriminate violence – a radicalization beyond amoral individualism. From post-left anarchists, they inherit critique of organizationalism and leftist moralism, yet strip away the liberatory horizon that characterized post-left thought. From anarcho-primitivism, they borrow critique of civilization and valorization of wildness, but reject primitivism's utopian dimension – the belief in possible return to egalitarian lifeways.

ITS thus occupies a paradoxical position: inheriting conceptual tools from individualist anarchism, post-left critique, and primitivist ecology, while systematically purging these traditions of humanistic commitments. The result is egoism without ethics, insurrection without liberation, primitivism without utopia.

Their discourse aligns not only with the anti-modernist stance of anarcho-primitivist thought but also with the rejection of collective political subjectivity characteristic of egoist traditions. These currents, though heterogeneous, converge in ITS's exaltation of instinct over reason, destruction over reform, and the sacredness of wild nature over humanist values. As others have noted, this rhetorical nihilism often reflects not a lack of ideology but a fusion of radical ecological resentment with existential violence (Faun, 1992; Kaczynski, 2010; McQuinn, 2000; Zerzan, 2005).

ITS is an organization that underwent a rapid ideological shift. In its initial phase (2011–2012), its statements emphasized criticism of the "Techno-Industrial System" and warned against technological advances. The group defined itself within an eco-extremist framework influenced by eco-anarchism: it expressed a radical rejection of civilization and technology, with an aggressive discourse against techno-scientific progress, but still employed rhetoric close to primitivist anarchism.

Just one year after launching their propaganda campaign, an ideological rupture can already be seen. Their Sixth Communiqué (ITS, 2012) is conceived as a self-criticism that abandons leftist positions or what they disparagingly refer to as "politically correct culture". In the same text, they explicitly reject previous altruistic concepts (equality, solidarity, revolution) and sentimental interpretations such as "animal liberation," calling them mere "sentimentality".

Initially, ITS seemed to target a very narrow audience: anarchist and eco-radical circles, as well as the authorities they sought to intimidate. Their first communiqués were distributed on anarchist blogs and online "counter-information" portals, hoping to gain legitimacy or at least the attention of the insurrectionary anarchist milieu. However, as their ideology shifted towards nihilism, ITS distanced itself from the traditional radical left, which redefined its audience. They began targeting potential ultra-radical allies. Their communication strategy shifted from trying to gain sympathy among anarchists (something that ultimately failed to happen, as most rejected them) to forging their own audience: an international community of misanthropic extremists.

ITS not only distanced itself from traditional anarchism and environmentalism, but directly attacked these original influences. The group accused anarchism of "moralism" and "humanism," rejecting its ethical approach and defence of human life. When anarchist circles began accusing ITS of being "state agents" or a "government front" for alleged state infiltration of the movement, ITS responded: "We are NOT anarchists!" Unlike insurrectionary anarchists who seek social change, "we […] do not seek change […] we find the human despicable" (ITS, 2019a). The group also distanced itself from previous anti-industrial currents (such as green anarchism or primitivism), which it accused of naiveté or incoherence. ITS decided it did not want to "be labeled with any name" (ITS, 2015) on the environmentalist spectrum. Instead, they embrace an extremist primitivism with almost religious overtones, where "Wild Nature" is venerated as a superior and chaotic entity, in contrast to a technologically advanced civilization they consider blasphemous. Although they do not literally profess a theistic cult, they do employ primitivist symbolism (references to tribal life, the "darkness" of the forest, the phases of the moon, etc.) and evoke mythical images of death and the primal war against society.

Among the elements used to justify this rupture is the contempt they feel for the moral qualms other groups have about causing victims. ITS embraced the concept of collateral damage and even deliberately sought it out: "We're not afraid to see death as 'bad' … among these are some radical anarchist screamers who dismiss anything related to death as fascism, animal cruelty, pfff!" (ITS, 2018b)

The discourse becomes increasingly misanthropic and nihilistic. The central theme remains a critique of technological civilization, but the tone hardens: chaos, death, and indiscriminate violence are exalted as valid responses to society. Their actions are no longer presented as a fight "for wildlife" from an ecological ethic, but rather as an amoral war against humanity, where terror is glorified for its own sake. This leads to the abandonment of their more specific initial targets (scientific, academic) in favour of a justification of violence against any modern individual: "We feel no remorse in attacking [humans] … this war is against civilization in its entirety" (ITS, 2018b).

Starting in 2016, the language became apotheotic and belligerent. Open war was declared on civilization, magnified by natural metaphors: "Our fire/attack is in the name of all that is wild … In the name of every species extinguished by technological-civilized progress!" (ITS, 2016a) Almost all "salvationist" nuances were abandoned in favour of a crude nihilism: they insisted that "nothing is ethically important". Any moral element was renounced: "I deny God without replacing him with anything" (ITS, 2019b), assuming the symbolic role of "Satan" in opposition to all human values. ITS's discourse was filled with symbols and mythological references, from the title of one of its publications, *Mictlanxochitl* ("flower of the underworld" in the Nahuatl dialect) to direct references to death deities. This allows them, for example, to turn the claim of murder of a priest into the following story: "Mictlantecuhtli, the ancient lord of the underworld (…) entered a Catholic church (…) with the intention of taking someone, anyone" (ITS, 2019b).

Occult and pagan terminology (wind spirits, forest demons, etc.) serves to exalt "Chaotic Nature" in contrast to Judeo-Christian morality. Not only do they reject established religions and secular humanism: "We have thrown away the Bible of anarchism … we spit and piss on the Christian God and his religion" (ITS, 2016b). The group employs its own animistic paganism: "Our Paganism believes in the cycles of the earth … we venerate and exalt all that is Wild and Unknown: the Mountain, the Rain, the Thunder, the Sun, the Wind, the Moon, the Rivers, the Condor, the Deer, etc" (ITS, 2016b). This primitivist spirituality is not a mere metaphor: the group describes its violent acts as inspired by natural forces. "In every attack on civilization, eco-extremists are driven by the call of the Wild Forest, a call that incites them to violent and radical action against progress and civilization" (ITS, 2016b).

ITS presents itself as the heir to the indigenous warrior tradition against the colonizer. Through symbolism and an almost ritualistic language (references to primitive fire, the moon, blood), it constructs a narrative that transcends the mere act of terrorism and elevates it to a kind of offering to the Savage. This provides its members with a transcendent combative identity, which becomes a key factor in sustaining nihilism: they fight without hope, but with the pride of being part of something "bigger."

The indiscriminate violence the group seeks to perpetrate is a lesser equivalent to the systemic violence perpetrated by progress (ecocides, historical genocides, mass exploitation). The attacks are just because they are dictated by an offended Nature, or because they restore a balance disrupted by humankind. Eco-extremist propaganda offers its followers an inverted moral justification: killing indiscriminately is no longer something to be hidden or lamented, but an al-

most religious duty to the Earth. This provides a powerful psychological incentive to those who might hesitate: it assures them that their cruelty is "blessed" by greater forces (nature, savage ancestors, dark gods).

The texts use stark imagery to describe the struggle (ITS, 2016c). Civilization is called a "thousand-headed hydra" that must be decapitated; eco-extremists see themselves "dancing in hell" while others live in dreams; there is talk of "blowing enemies to pieces, " "burning" with the world, and so on.

ITS has become one of the few groups that have accepted and unabashedly embraced the terrorist label. In their propaganda, they champion the idea of being "terrorists by amoral conviction." Terrorism is an end in itself: "In the midst of this civilized mess, we are here to contribute to the destabilization … at least we will cause as much damage as we can" (ITS, 2019b). They proudly state that "we are called terrorists by those useless members of industrial society; let them know that we will take that term as a compliment " (ITS, 2014b). ITS thus embraces the most extreme label: "We are a nihilistic minority, unrelated to any human cause, dedicated to terrorizing and destroying because that is our response to civilization. We neither want nor need your approval – in fact, we seek your horror" (ITS, 2014b).

For potential followers, they offer a dark theology (Avenging Nature), elitist camaraderie (the only lucid ones in a corrupt world), and individual liberation through violence. For enemies or the public, they issue a terrifying challenge: they cannot be understood or negotiated with, only feared: "We are those evil, demonic, and atrocious monsters that are seen and looming on the horizon" (ITS, 2017c).

The group christens its digital library with this nickname: "Enemy of All Society." This extreme self-marginalization is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it makes it difficult for them to recruit large numbers of followers (their message repels almost anyone with a shred of empathy), but on the other hand it attracts a completely committed fanatical core, ready for the cruellest violence without dilemmas: "[I] see you in the eyes … with hatred, I would like to kill you all to 'free' us from this hell, but I don't think anyone … Thank me for this noble gesture" (ITS, 2016d). Society is composed solely of "morons" or "pathetic bastards" lulled to sleep by the system. Strategically, ITS prioritizes quality (ideological ferocity) over quantity of adherents. Its propaganda functions more as a filter than as a mass magnet.

The aesthetic dimension of ITS's propaganda is consistent with the evolution and tone of its discourse. Its early propaganda products follow the fanzine aesthetic of the anarchist milieu. The graphic style oscillates between the anarchist "Do It Yourself" aesthetic (typical of the fanzine) and an increasingly professional air as time goes on. All the aesthetic choices made by the group converge to reinforce ITS's nihilistic message. By visually normalizing violence and mortality (e.g., by showing skulls, scenes of sacrifice, natural disasters), it conveys the idea that destruction is inevitable and even desirable. Misanthropy finds an echo in how people are depicted: virtually absent or represented as anonymous victims. When human figures do appear, they are often caricatured as "enemies" (scientists, businessmen) in negative contexts, or urban masses portrayed as faceless crowds. This dehumanizes the adversary and reinforces contempt for the "civilized sheep." Visual attention falls on animals, forests, and ancient gods, relegating human beings to a secondary role or merely as targets of violence.

## Conclusions

The analysis of the discourse of Individualities Tending Toward the Wild allows us to identify an extreme and minority form of contemporary terrorism: one in which propaganda no longer serves an instrumental, persuasive function, but rather becomes an expressive, self-referential, and nihilistic vehicle. This finding is of considerable importance from both a theoretical and practical perspective.

First, the existence of a form of terrorism that explicitly rejects persuasion undermines the foundations of classical terrorist communication theory, which focuses on the impact on a target audience. ITS discourse is framed within a communicative logic not aimed at changing perceptions or gaining support, but rather at dramatizing hatred and reinforcing an antisocial identity. ITS propaganda acts as a ritual of violent consecration, rather than as a means of doctrinal dissemination. This performative and misanthropic use of language represents a break with the dominant paradigm in studies on violent radicalization, which considers that extremist narratives can and should be countered through alternative narratives.

Second, the implications of this type of violent extremism for prevention policies are clear. Most current strategies, from counter-narrative programs to community resilience-based approaches, assume that extremism is an ideological construct susceptible to being discussed, defused, or replaced through discursive intervention. ITS, however, shows that certain radical actors do not wish to be understood or convinced: their goal is rejection, repulsion, and the glorification of harm. In this sense, non-persuasive propaganda becomes a form of tactical self-isolation, which immunizes the group against external delegitimization and allows it to radicalize without friction with its contradictions. This forces us to rethink traditional prevention frameworks, which are ineffective against discourses that do not seek any kind of support.

Third, the relevance of this analysis also extends to the broader field of contemporary expressive violence. ITS is not an isolated case: it shares traits with other emerging forms of extremism without a redeeming cause, such as far-right accelerationism, certain nihilistic loners inspired by violent internet aesthetics, or even expressions of misanthropic eco-fascism. All of these actors use communication more as an aesthetic statement than as a political medium. Recognizing this shift from persuasive to performative propaganda allows us to refine the categories with which we study terrorism in a post-ideological era.

Several concrete avenues for future research that could advance both theoretical understanding and practical prevention strategies. First, comparative case studies are needed to determine whether ITS represents an isolated anomaly or part of a broader pattern, examining other eco-extremist groups internationally, accelerationist far-right networks, and nihilistic lone actors to establish whether non-persuasive propaganda transcends specific ideologies and contexts. Second, audience reception studies would complement this discourse analysis with empirical data on actual impact – through interviews with former sympathizers, analysis of online forum discussions, or experimental studies measuring responses to misanthropic rhetoric – to illuminate gaps between intended rejection and actual effects, including possible fascination among susceptible individuals. Finally, interdisciplinary collaboration among terrorism scholars, psychologists, criminologists, and digital media researchers could provide more comprehensive understanding through studies combining discourse analysis with psychological profiling and network analysis. Addressing these questions would advance both academic understanding and evidence-based prevention capabilities for emerging forms of expressive political violence.

In conclusion, the case of ITS reveals a blind spot in terrorism studies: the existence of actors for whom propaganda serves not to persuade but to perform hatred. This expressive turn – where communication becomes ritual rather than strategy – challenges both our theoretical frameworks and practical prevention tools. As political violence increasingly manifests in forms detached from coherent ideological projects, understanding non-persuasive propaganda becomes essential. The analytical categories developed in this study – performative terrorism, misanthropic discourse, and anti-social identity construction – offer conceptual tools for grappling with extremism in a post-ideological age where destruction itself becomes the message.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

**ORCID**

Manuel R. Torres-Soriano orcid.org

## References

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.

Ayala, D. (2018). Los días que se iluminó la noche: Insurrectos, eco-extremistas y otros anarquistas. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. https://ru.dgb.unam.mx/bitstream/20.500.14330/T

BBC Mundo. (2019, May 23). ¿Quiénes son 'Individualidades Tendiendo a lo Salvaje' (ITS), el grupo eco-extremista detrás de ataques en México? https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-la

BioBioChile Investigaciones. (2017). ¿Qué es el eco-extremismo? Un análisis a Individualistas Tendiendo a lo Salvaje. BioBioChile. https://media.biobiochile.cl/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/qu-e

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa Butler, J. (1997). *Excitable speech: A politics of the performative*. Routledge.

Collins, S., & Plohetski, T. (2018, May 15). Inside the Austin bomber's life: Questions of friends, faith, sexuality. Austin American-Statesman. https://www.statesman.com/story/news/2018/05/15/in

Contramadriz. (2018, December 16). Recopilación sobre el eco-extremismo, las ITS y las tendencias misántropas. Contramadriz ESPIV blogs. https://contramadriz.espivblogs.net/2018/12/16/rec

Corner, E., Gill, P., & Mason, O. (2016). Mental health disorders and the terrorist: A research note probing selection effects and disorder prevalence. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, *39*(6), 560–568. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1120099 Debord, G. (1967). *The society of the spectacle*. Zone Books.

de la Corte Ibáñez, L. (2006). *La lógica del terrorismo*. Alianza Editorial.

Edelweiss Pirates. (2017). Of indiscriminate attacks & wild reactions: An anti-civ anarchist engages with ITS and Atassa, their defenders and their false critics. The anarchist library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/edelweiss-pirates-of-indiscriminate-attacks-w Ellul, J. (1965). *Propaganda: The formation of men's attitudes*. Vintage Books.

Enemy of Every Society. (n.d.). Biblioteca eco-extremista. Retrieved June 20, 2025, from, https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/biblioteca-eco-extremista/

Faun, F. (1992). The ideology of victimization. *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, *33*, 24–29.

Fleming, S. (2024). Searching for ecoterrorism: The crucial case of the Unabomber. *The American Political Science Review*, *118*(4), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055424000219

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *12*(2), 219–245. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363

Hamm, M. S., & Spaaij, R. (2017). *The age of lone wolf terrorism*. Columbia University Press.

Harmon, C. C., & Bowdish, R. G. (2018). *The terrorist argument: Modern advocacy and propaganda*. Brookings Institution Press.

Heinle, K., Rodríguez Ferreira, O., & Shirk, D. A. (2018). *Drug violence in Mexico: Data and analysis through 2017*. University of San Diego.

Illades, C., & Mondragón, R. (2023). *Izquierdas radicales en México: Anarquismos y nihilismos posmodernos*. Penguin Random House.

Individualist Network. (2018). Seek and destroy eco-extremism everywhere: A joint statement of Individualist Network and Indonesian Anarchist Black Cross. The anarchist library. https://sea.theanarchistlibrary.org/library/individualist-network-indonesian-anarchis

Instinto Salvaje. (n.d.). Instinto salvaje. Retrieved June 20, 2025, from, https://instintosalvaje.noblogs.org

Institute for Strategic Dialogue. (2025, May 8). Terror without ideology? The rise of nihilistic violence — an ISD investigation. Isd digital dispatches. https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/

ITS. (2012). Indirect response and self-criticism of ITS, in response to criticism from UR and AC. Palabras nocivas ii: Conjunto de textos contra el progreso tecnológico (segunda parte). https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/palabras-nociv

ITS. (2014a). *Palabras nocivas n.º 5*. Ediciones Aborigen. https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/w

ITS. (2014b). *Palabras nocivas nº 4*. Ediciones Aborigen. https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/w

ITS. (2015). *Palabras nocivas nº IX*. Ediciones Aborígen. https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/w

ITS. (2016a). Mictlanxochitl, parte 1. Revista Regresión. https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/w

ITS. (2016b). Malditos, nuestra respuesta es como el terremoto… tarde o temprano llega. https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/malditos_-nues

ITS. (2016c). *Reflexiones eco-extremistas nº 1*. Ediciones Anti-Humanistas Taguatuhú.

ITS. (2016d). *Atassa: Readings in eco-extremism*. LBC Books. https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.co

ITS. (2017a). Comunicado 50. Mictlanxochitl (Vol. 4). https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/wp-

ITS. (2017b). Anhangá #1: Em guerra contra a civilização e o progresso humano desde o sul. https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/anhanga-1.clea

ITS. (2017c). *Reflexiones eco-extremistas nº 4*. Ediciones Anti-Humanistas Taguatuhú. https://enemigodetodaso

ITS. (2018a). *Mictlanxochitl, no. 3*. Editorial Kóshmenk. https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/wp

ITS. (2018b). *Mictlanxochitl, parte 2*. Editorial Kóshmenk. https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/

ITS. (2019a). *Reflexiones eco-extremistas, no. 4*. Ediciones Anti Humanistas Taguatuhú. https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/reflexiones-ec

ITS. (2019b). *Mictlanxochitl, parte 4*. Editorial Kóshmenk. https://enemigodetodasociedad.wordpress.com/

Jowett, G. S., & O'Donnell, V. (2018). *Propaganda & persuasion* (7th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Juergensmeyer, M. (2017). *Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence* (4th ed.). University of California Press.

Kaczynski, T. (2010). *Technological slavery: The collected writings of Theodore J. Kaczynski*. FC Press.

Kaczynski, T. (2017, November 28). Ted Kaczynski on individualists tending toward savagery (ITS). *Wild Will Project Blog*. https://web.archive.org/web/20180117093302/https:/www.wildwill.

Kloppe-Santamaría, G. (2020). *In the vortex of violence: Lynching, extralegal justice, and the state in post-revolutionary Mexico*. University of California Press.

Kriner, M., Newhouse, A., & Ware, J. (2024). Behind the skull mask: An overview of militant accelerationism. Global network on extremism & technology. https://gnet-research.org/2024/behind-the

Lankford, A. (2014). Précis of the myth of martyrdom: What really drives suicide bombers, rampage shooters, and other self-destructive killers. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *37*(4), 351–362. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X13001581

Loadenthal, M. (2017). *The politics of attack: Communiqués and insurrectionary violence*. Manchester University Press.

Los hijos del Mencho. (2018). Against the world-builders: Eco-extremists respond to critics. The anarchist library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/los-hijos-del-mencho-against-th

Lubrano, M. (2025). *Stop the machines: The rise of anti-technology extremism*. Polity Press.

Maldición Eco-Extremista. (2016). Maldición eco-extremista. Internet Archive. Retrieved June 20, 2025, from, https://web.archive.org/web/20160902172153/http:/maldicionecoextremista.espi

Matusitz, J. (2012). *Symbolism in terrorism: Motivation, communication, and behavior*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Matusitz, J. (2013). *Terrorism and communication: A critical introduction*. SAGE Publications.

McQuinn, J. (2000). Post-left anarchy: Leaving the left behind. *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, *51*.

Meloy, J. R., & Gill, P. (2016). The lone-actor terrorist and the TRAP-18. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, *3*(1), 37–52. https://doi.org/10.1037/tam0000061

Nacos, B. L. (2016). *Mass-mediated terrorism: Mainstream and digital media in terrorism and counterterrorism*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Neumann, P. R. (2013). The trouble with radicalization. *International Affairs*, *89*(4), 873–893. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12049

Ortigoza Vázquez, A. (2019, March 4). El grupo terrorista ITS pone en jaque al Estado de México. Excélsior. https://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/el-grupo-terrorista-its-pone-en-jaque-a

Phillips, L. (2012). Nanotechnology: Armed resistance. *Nature*, *488*(7413), 576–579. https://doi.org/10.1038/

Reinares, F. (1998). *Terrorismo y antiterrorismo*. Paidós.

Rodríguez, G. (Ed.). (2013). *¡Que se ilumine la noche! Refractarios hasta las últimas consecuencias*. Internacional Negra Ediciones.

Schmid, A. P. (2014). Violent and non-violent extremism: Two sides of the same coin? *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism — The Hague*, *5*(5). https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2014/05/Alex-Sch

Schmid, A. P., & de Graaf, J. (1982). *Violence as communication: Insurgent terrorism and the western news media*. SAGE Publications.

Shaya, G. (2010). How to make an anarchist-terrorist: An essay on the political imaginary in fin-de-siècle France. *Journal of Social History*, *44*(2), 521–543. https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh.2010.0073 Sloterdijk, P. (2010). *Rage and time: A psychopolitical investigation*. Columbia University Press.

Tetreault, D., Ochoa-García, H., & Hernández-González, E. (Eds.). (2012). *Conflictos socioambientales y alternativas de la sociedad civil*. ITESO.

Treacy, S., Reed, A., & Glazzard, A. (2024). A systematic integrative review of counter-messaging communication campaigns targeting terrorism or violent extremism. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 1–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2024.2419390

Último Reducto Salvaje. (n.d.). Último reducto salvaje. Retrieved June 20, 2025, from, https://ultimoreductosalvaje.blogspot.com/

Voz Como Arma. (2017, May 15). No hay nada anarquista en el eco-fascismo: Una condena. *Voz Como Arma Blog*. https://vozcomoarma.noblogs.org/?p=16462
Zerzan, J. (2005). *Against civilization: Readings and reflections*. Feral House.

Manuel R. Torres-Soriano
On the margins of terrorist propaganda
Individualities Tending Toward Wildness (ITS) and the non-persuasive communication of ecoextremism
30 Apr 2026

Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict. <www.doi.org/10.1080/17467586.2026.2662890>
**Author affiliation:** Public Law Department, Pablo de Olavide University, Seville, Spain