From Environmental Action to Ecoterrorism?
Towards a Process Theory of Environmental and Animal Rights Oriented Political Violence

Gerry Nagtzaam, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, Monash University, Australia

This book scrutinizes the growth of the 'eco-terrorism' movement operating on a global scale, focusing on the main groups and their more radical offshoots, both historically and those currently active. These include Earth First!, the Earth Liberation Front, the Animal Liberation Front and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. It critically examines how these groups form and how they have evolved, their key personnel, their strategies and tactics, principles, motivating philosophies and attitudes to violence. Specifically, the book seeks to understand whether such groups inevitably evolve from activists to militants to terrorists, as the literature suggests. Lastly, it considers the future of such groups, asking whether they will become more prominent as more people become ecologically aware and as global environmental conditions deteriorate, or whether such groups have peaked as a force for environmental change.

'This book is an important contribution to the literature on eco-terrorism and the application of radicalization theories to explaining possible trajectories into violence.'
– Perspectives on Terrorism

‘From Environmental Action to Ecoterrorism? offers perhaps the clearest and most comprehensive examination of radical environmental groups and tactics to date, and does so in a balanced and richly narrated manner. Taking the Animal Liberation Front, Earth First! and the Sea Shepherds as case studies, Nagtzaam focuses upon the processes by which persons and groups undergo radicalization and come to embrace political violence. Tracing the evolution of group strategies, leaders and philosophies, his detailed narrative and careful theoretical and empirical analysis underscore the need for a better understanding of radicalization processes. Scholars and students interested in the development of radical environmentalism or in the dynamics of more militant forms of environmental resistance will find much to explore. Those merely interested in the history and internal dynamics of radical environmentalism as a social movement, and the cautionary tale that it contains, will also find much to admire in this engaging book.’
– Steve Vanderheiden, University of Colorado at Boulder, US

‘In a book that is non-alarmist in tone, yet inherently attentive to the fact that such groups can constitute challenges to law enforcement and society more generally, Nagtzaam enhances our understanding of radicalization, reaffirming that it is a process not just currently confined and relevant to Islamist groups and exclusivist nationalist organizations. He approaches and frames radical actors and radicalization in a neutral, technical manner, advocating that neither should be inherently associated or equated with violence and terrorism. His study also reinforces that while mainstream environmental and animal rights groups and their more militant counterparts occasionally share affinities, they are distinguished by very different philosophies and modes of operation on resolving ecological crises.’
– Peter Lentini, Monash University, Australia

‘Overall, this book makes a useful contribution by presenting a comprehensive examination of a relatively under examined and highly contested area. It will serve as a foundation on which future work can build to analyse the emergence of radical environmentalism and how it can be managed. This book will be of interest to researchers and practitioners seeking to understand the origins of radicalism and the methods by which movement organizations are formed and evolve.’

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