Soviet Union leader Vladimir Lenin sits in his Kremlin office, reading the *Pravda* (*Truth*) newspaper 16 October 1918 in Moscow, Russia. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Lenin's Formula for Agenda Setting

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We know that it is not at all necessary to have the sympathy of a majority of the people in order to rule them. The right organization can turn the trick.

—Roger Trinquier

Soviet Union founder Vladimir Ilych Lenin used three linked concepts to set a public-issues agenda that facilitated his seizure and consolidation of political power in Russia circa 1917. Familiarity with these tenets and their relationships is valuable to military strategic planners for two reasons. First, awareness may give coherence of understanding with regard to a specific methodology that has been used for more than a century by many diverse insurgent and terrorist groups as well as authoritarian regimes such as China, Russia, North Korea, Cuba, and Venezuela to seize political power and then exercise sociopolitical control once in

power. Second, the linkages between them help reveal the underlying ideology of many domestic lobbying and community organizations that operate in stable political states and use those tenets to shape the domestic sociocultural environment in which today's Western military planners must operate.

The relationship of the concepts is supported in this article by incremental development of a rudimentary model to help illuminate how each concept relates to others in the agenda-setting process. The model does not pretend to encompass all the myriad factors associated with the very complex phenomenon of garnering public support needed to prevail in political conflict. However, it is intended to help operational and strategic planners identify the broad, and sometimes difficult to discern, relationships among the concepts specified that continue to be employed by adversaries against the West and against the United States in particular.

Agenda Setting

For the purposes of this article, *agenda setting* is the complex process by which a few issues of public concern are culled from a wide universe of competing issues that then become the major focus of a given community's psychological orientation, discussion, debate, and opinion formation. Development of the model proposed here helps answer the essential question: How might a political activist (such as an insurgent revolutionary) set the public agenda in a manner conducive to obtaining specific political objectives? Answering this requires by necessity examining two other key questions in the course of the article: Who are the agenda setters that take it upon themselves to cull from all possible issues those that then become the focus of community interest? And, how do such agenda setters focus a population's attention on a narrowly chosen set of issues about which they want that population to think?

How Public Opinion Changes

Setting aside for the moment circumstances where the community is coerced into accepting an imposed agenda, most people in any polity are highly dependent on others for the substance of their opinions on issues outside the scope of their immediate day-to-day experience. A large body of research shows that the key decisions most people make in forming their opinion on public issues generally do not stem from their independent analysis of the nuanced details of those issues, but rather on their selection of the opinion leaders whom they choose to think for them. Thus, opinion swings inside groups with similar sociopolitical leanings more often than not are the product of the influence of shifts in opinions by a given group's respected opinion leaders and agenda setters rather than of individual group member analysis and consideration.[1] Consequently, for those seeking to either understand or to sway public opinion for political purposes, the most essential factor is to identify who a given community's key agenda-setting opinion leaders are, and how these may be swayed in their opinions to support the activist's agenda.

Why Many People Rely on Others to Think for Them

Although there is a universe of important issues about which any given individual might think and be concerned, many people are only able to concern themselves with and think in depth about a small fraction of them. It is not that individuals are necessarily uninterested in large community or national issues. Rather, it is that many people usually have other more pressing, time-consuming priorities that are the focus of their daily attention and energy, such as how to make a living or manage the challenges of raising families. For such, the issues of primary personal concern are so dominant and time consuming that there is little cognitive space for thinking about other issues that do not directly affect their personal lives in an immediate, threatening way (see figure 1 on page 116). Thus, that segment of a population who feels socially or morally obligated to have an opinion on greater social or national issues routinely seeks out surrogates to think for them, and subsequently formulates the details of the opinions they will adopt based on their faith and confidence in their chosen surrogate thinkers.

Agenda-Setting Opinion Leaders

The surrogate thinkers that act as

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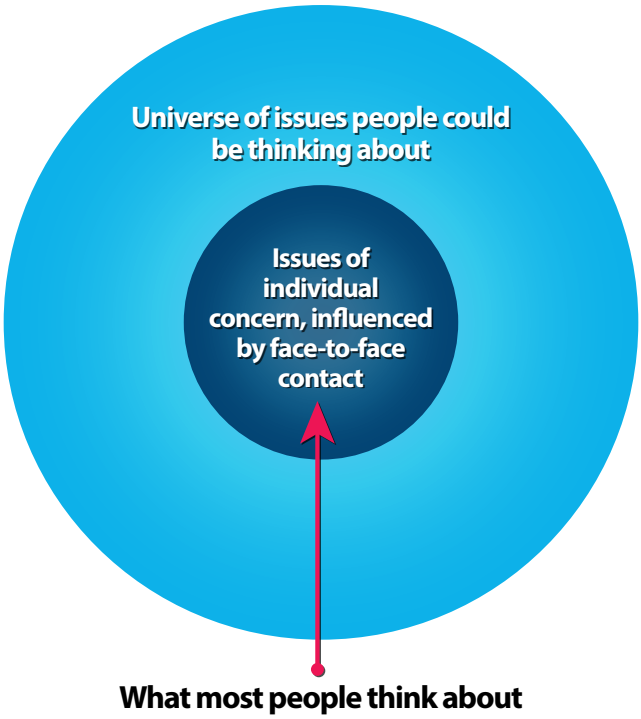
community agenda setters for many people are generally of three types. First, there are the traditional community agenda setters. Throughout most of human history, agenda setters have been community leaders with whom other community members had personal contact. Such leaders include leading members of prominent families, charismatic teachers, local government officials, military or law enforcement officials, clergy, and informal as well as formal peer-group leaders, among others. They gain their influence either by inherited stature or from personal achievement as observed by the community.

However, starting with Gutenberg's printing press in 1439, a second type of agenda setter emerged—personalities involved in producing and editing mass media distributed from afar. These agenda setters set community agendas through the impersonal, long-distance influence of widely distributed appealing words, ideas, and images. Such powerful impersonal agenda-setting leaders have evolved in our own time to have great vicarious influence on community agendas because of the opinions reported through the media that do not involve transfer through immediate face-to-face contact. Since Gutenberg, mass media expanded the circle of agenda setters to encompass charismatic political theorists, philosophers and religious thinkers, educators, national or international activists, entertainment and sports figures, fashion figures, popular news reporters, and others with similar popular appeal. Though it remains argued whether media-figure influence or traditional person-to-person influence has greater sway, there is little doubt that media figures have become potent agenda setters through broad, but impersonal, contact with the public through mass media.[2]

On assessing just how influential media agenda setters actually have become, it is useful to highlight the work of media scholars Donald Shaw and Maxwell McCombs, whose exhaustive research has persuasively demonstrated the powerful influence mass media have on setting the public agenda in the modern world. Their conclusions, first demonstrated while researching the impact of media on elections in the United States, definitively established the immensely strong correlation between issues the media editorially select to cover and those that have pivotal influence during election cycles. Subsequently, the studies of Shaw and McCombs have been widely replicated by hundreds of other media and sociology scholars, the majority of which have arrived at similar conclusions.[3] Such subsequent research appears to validate that media have



(Graphic by Arin Burgess, *Military Review*)

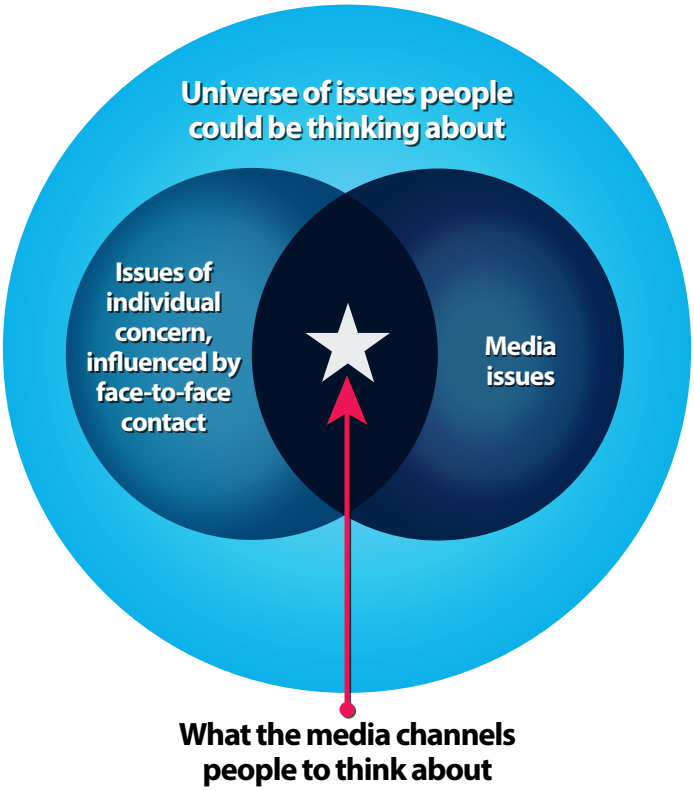
Figure 1. Issues of Individual Interest

exceptionally strong, if not decisive, influence on framing the community agenda-setting process that selects the issues not only about which elections are decided but also about the social issues in general that become the popular focus of community concern, debate, and controversy. As Shaw and colleagues Thomas C. Terry and Milad Minooie noted in a recent article,

> What is agenda setting? Political scientist Bernard Cohen in the early 1960s discovered that what people knew about foreign affairs was closely related to the editorial selection of items covered in the news media they followed (i.e., media connect people and set a news agenda)....
>
> Cohen's research led him to argue that the press was not especially effective in telling people what to think but was exceptionally powerful in telling people what to think—and talk—*about*. This, in a phrase, is *agenda setting*: media frame and focus community interest on a discrete set of issue by means of regular news coverage.
>
> Since then, hundreds of media studies have confirmed the observation that news media

> influence which issues and topics people consider most important and are worthy of thinking and talking about, to the exclusion of other important issues and topics of possible interest available.[4]

Thus, two major types of agenda setters have evolved that overlap in modern society and mutually support each other in defining community agendas: those who set agendas through personal contact with members of the community, and those who set community agendas through the mass media (see figure 2).



(Graphic by Arin Burgess, *Military Review*)

Figure 2. Media-Focused Issues

However, there is a potent third category of agenda-setting agents that must be incorporated into the agenda-setting process. Lenin's theory includes those agents who are organized to *coerce* public focus on issues. The relationship of these three agenda setters will be discussed together as key elements of Lenin's theory below.

Lenin as a Media Theorist

The great influence that media have on defining community issues considered in public elections is highlighted by the relationship among key concepts in a political-influence process formulated by Lenin. Lenin originated his concepts while serving as leader of the Bolshevik branch of the Russian Communist Party in the lead-up to the Russian Revolution of 1917. To understand why he developed them, some background is necessary.

> Commencing in the late 1800s, there was much controversy concerning Marxist theory among European communist and socialist leaders. Discussions became heated and frequently characterized by personal attacks, innuendo, threats, and, not infrequently, violence. The sticking point that produced so much contention dealt with disagreements over interpretations of Marxist theory; whether Karl Marx had actually predicted the demise of capitalism via the process some referred to as economic determinism.[5] Frustrated European communist and socialist leaders increasingly questioned and critically analyzed why the end of history they believed Marx had predicted decades earlier had not come to pass. However, some resisted calls to revise interpretations of Marxist doctrine to conform to historical experience. The most vocal ideologues dogmatically insisted that the nature of capitalism and the forces driving it to inevitable destruction had only temporarily stalled but would regain momentum because of the inevitable natural forces of economic determinism.[6]
>
> For his part, Lenin bitterly repudiated the concept of economic determinism, labeling this concept "economism" and denouncing it as naïve faith in mysterious forces that would produce the inevitability of a spontaneous rise of the proletariat. He argued instead that such contentions were completely misinterpreting and distorting Marx's analysis. Rather, Lenin insisted, the evolving character of capitalism would inevitably produce nothing but the emergence of an opportunity for the proletariat to rise and seize the means of production.[7] Consequently, Lenin asserted, committed communists had the responsibility to organize and agitate for revolution and not merely wait for conditions to incubate by themselves spontaneously based on misplaced faith in so-called natural laws of economic determinism.[8]

In an effort to promote this view more widely, Lenin wrote and published a monograph titled "What Is To

Be Done?"[9] In it, Lenin laid down a simple but profound prescription for successful political activism that provided a broad outline explaining how to organize a revolutionary political movement together with explaining the essential relationship of mass media to that movement and how media should be used to further political ends. This article has had enormous influence on political activism from his time to the present. In this monograph, Lenin describes the two key principles he asserted were required for fomenting revolution.

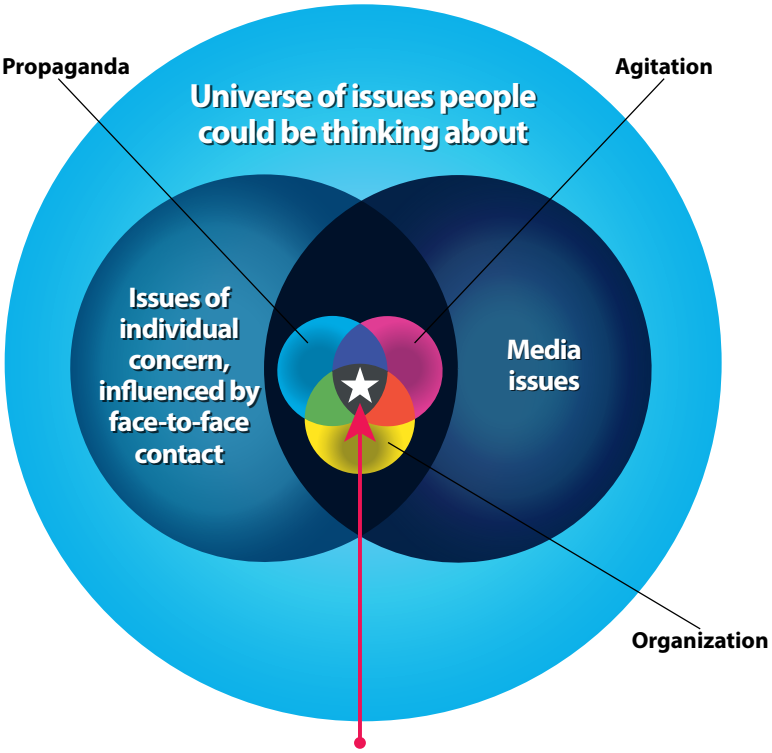
The Vanguard Party

Lenin maintained that the first of two key steps for advancing a political objective was to establish a *vanguard party*—a core group of highly disciplined "professional" activists (revolutionaries). The purpose of this core element within a political party was to work full time organizing and leading the political effort. Such a vanguard party was essential, Lenin asserted, because—in contrast to the orthodox faith of some dogmatic Marxists—he did not feel the proletariat would have the capacity to be anything but a courageous yet hapless mob unless carefully instructed, trained, and then tightly disciplined by a leadership organization. Without such a vanguard party, he maintained, a political movement would be led by amateurs and fail.

Among the principal responsibilities of the vanguard party was to educate the proletariat, instilling in them political and class consciousness. To do this, the vanguard party had to assume the role of instilling in the working class recognition of the class struggle at the same time it organized and expanded the movement by enforcing rigid and ruthless party discipline among recruits for the revolutionary cause.

> On the other hand, the organization of the revolutionaries must consist first and foremost of people who make revolutionary activity their profession … In view of this common characteristic of the members of such an organization … Such an organization must perforce not be very extensive and must be as secret as possible.… If we begin with the solid foundation of a strong organization of revolutionaries, we can ensure the stability of the movement as a whole and carry out the aims both of Social-Democracy and of trade unions proper.[10]

One might ask, if Lenin were alive today, what organizations might he recognize as the heirs of his vanguard-party concept? Subsequent to Lenin's day, one can hardly think of a successful revolutionary or insurgency movement of any consequence in the twentieth or twenty-first century that was not led by the equivalent of a vanguard party. Examples include Benito Mussolini's Fascist Party in Italy, Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party in Germany, and Hugo Chavez's Fifth Republic Movement in Venezuela, to name just a small representation of such organizations. Elsewhere, Islamic radicals Sayyid Qutb and Abul Ala Maududi both posited that Islamic vanguard parties were necessary to lead the world's lost and wayward Muslim



(Graphic by Arin Burgess, *Military Review*)

Figure 3. Party-Focused Issues

community back to a restoration of Islamic society. For example, Qutb emphatically specified the need for an Islamist vanguard in his book *Milestones*:

> It is necessary that there should be a vanguard, which sets out with this determination, and then keeps walking on the path ….
>
> It is necessary that this vanguard should know the landmarks and the milestones of the road toward this goal …
>
> I have written "Milestones" for this vanguard.[11]

But, just as significantly, it can legitimately be argued that much of the character of modern-day political lobbying and community organizing is a direct heir of the Leninist concept that a political movement can only succeed if it is led by a professional organization of full-time agitators organizing and propagandizing for a cause.

The emphasis on creating vanguard-party-style leadership to facilitate organization and agitation is on prominent display among lobbying and activist organizations across the spectrum of political orientation in the West. In the United States, such examples of professional agitators and organizers include (or have included) the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), the American Civil Liberties Union, People for Ethical Treatment of Animals, the National Rifle Association, the National Council of La Raza, and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, to mention just a tiny fraction of such vanguard-party style groups.

Not surprisingly, the literature that often guides the activities of such lobbying groups and community-activist groups has been produced by professional community organizers and agitators like Saul Alinsky and Wade Rathke, whose writings reflect the Leninist imperative to build vanguard organizations together with occasional allusions to, and overtones of, Leninist jargon, thinking, and practice. For example, in his *Rules for Radicals*, Alinsky observes,

> A naked illustration of this point is to be found in Trotsky's summary of Lenin's famous *April Theses*, issued shortly after Lenin's return from exile. Lenin pointed out: "the task of the Bolsheviks is to overthrow the Imperialist Government. But, this government rests upon the support of the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, who in turn are supported by the trustfulness of the masses of people. We are in the minority. In these circumstances, there can be no talk of violence on our side." The essence of Lenin's speeches during this period was, "They have the guns and therefore we are for peace and for reformation through the ballot. When we have the guns, then it will be through the bullet." And it was.[12]

Indeed, Alinsky himself billed his book *Rules for Radicals* as nothing less than a guide for organizing and agitating for revolution by conducting activities that clearly resonate with overtones of Leninist-like strategies aimed at coercing a result from a political opponent through skillful organization, agitation, and propaganda (see figure 3).

Mass Medium Required for Revolution

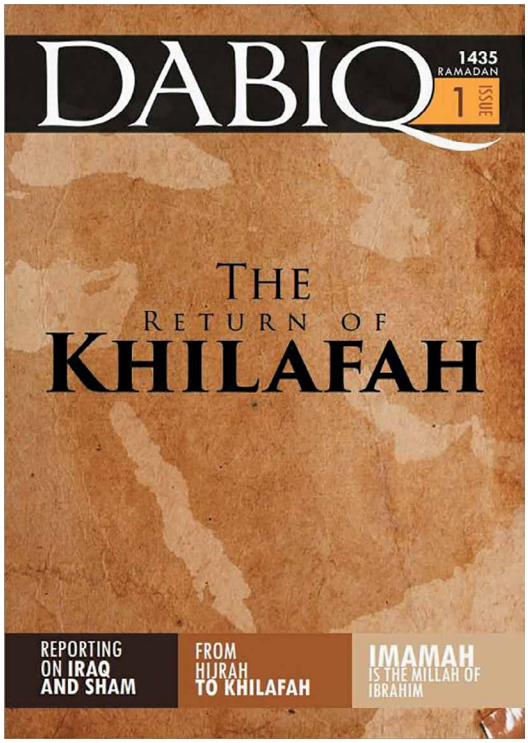
Second, for the vanguard party to succeed, Lenin asserted that it was essential for it to control at least one influential mass medium. Consequently, Lenin stipulated that the vanguard party must get under its direct control a mass medium totally dedicated to promoting its cause. For this purpose, he called for establishment of what he termed an "all-Russia" newspaper. Why a newspaper? In an era when radio and telegraph were in their infancy and the telephone still being invented, the only true mass medium available was the newspaper. He describes the vital necessity of such a medium to political activism as follows:

> The publication of an all-Russia political newspaper must be *the main line* by which we may unswervingly develop, deepen, and expand the organization (viz., the revolutionary organization that is ever ready to support every protest and every outbreak)….
>
> A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organizer. In this respect *it may be compared to the scaffolding* erected round a building under construction; it marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, permitting them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organized labour.[13]

In other words, the purposes of the "all-Russia" newspaper as outlined by Lenin were to provide employment to the members of the vanguard party as

they built the party and movement; and to serve as the party's instrument for organizing followers of the party, propagandizing the movement's cause, and agitating in multiple venues to undermine the existing sociopolitical order and set the conditions for the popular rise of the proletariat.

If Lenin were alive today, which instruments of communication would he seek to control in order to organize, agitate, and propagandize his cause, and which at the same time would serve as the scaffolding to build the party? If anything, Lenin was visionary and opportunistic. Therefore, there is no doubt that Lenin would have sought out the most state-of-the-art media available in an effort to focus public attention on his political objectives. Consequently, the vast potential for using the Internet and social media to reach millions as a rapid and cost-effective means for organizing, agitating, and propagandizing could not have failed to attract his attention. Though his program of modern activism might have included traditional media such as pamphlets and newspapers, he would more likely have focused on pursuing exposure through television and radio broadcasts, and especially through the Internet and social media.



Among the first steps the Islamic State (IS) took when establishing itself was to publish a glossy magazine, *Dabiq*, to serve as a principal organ for recruiting, organizing, propagandizing, and agitating for the IS cause. The first edition appeared in July 2014.

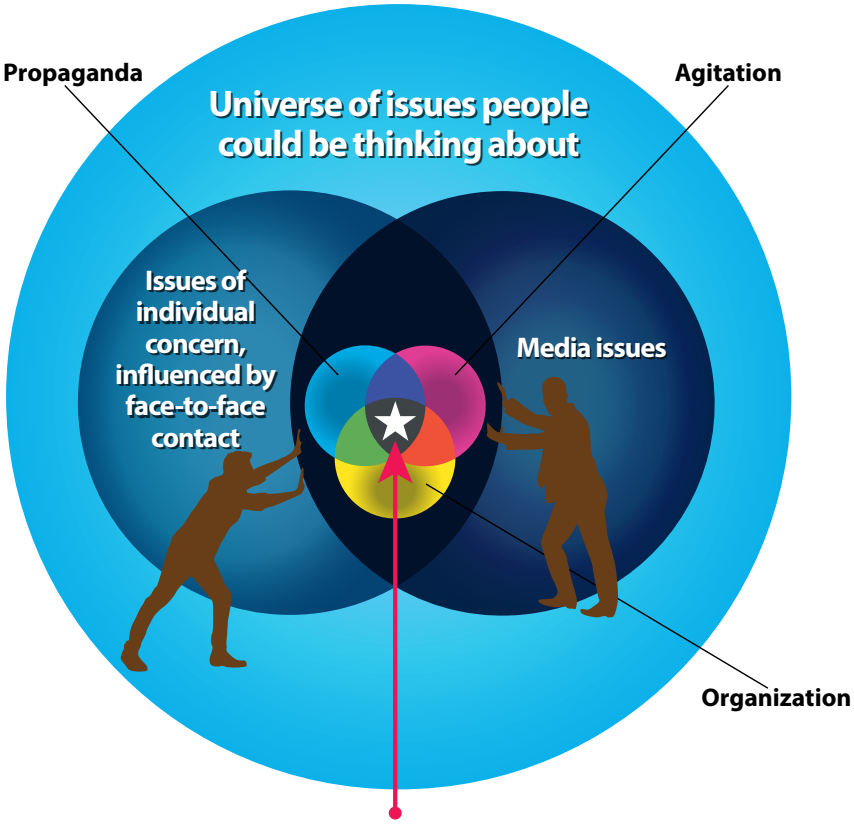
Not surprisingly, following Lenin's formula, the Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaida today employ the Internet in exactly the role the Leninist model envisioned for the media: as an instrument for recruiting, organizing, and synchronizing party activities, propagandizing their ideology, and agitating for their causes. For example, both al-Qaida and IS have a sophisticated webpage presence, each featuring a publication that serves the purpose of promoting and organizing for its agenda. Moreover, Lenin would have likely felt quite at home, understood well, and approved of the IS policy that encourages the Internet broadcast of beheadings in a calculated effort that serves the dual purpose of both terrorizing opponents as well as taunting and frustrating Western governments.

Subsequent to Lenin's day, one can hardly think of an identifiable revolutionary or insurgency movement with any resilience in either the twentieth or twenty-first century that did not feature a vanguard party with control or outright ownership of at least one mass medium tailored to its needs or the environment in which it operated. For example, the *Volksicher Beobachter* (*National Observer*) supported the rise of the National Socialist Party in pre-World War II Germany, *Pravda* (*Truth*) supported the Bolshevik consolidation of power in Russia, and *Granma* supported the communist party of Fidel Castro in his domination of Cuba. These are just a few such examples demonstrating the fusion Lenin stated was necessary between a vanguard party and control of a mass medium to usurp and then maintain political hegemony over a polity.

The Need for Cheka

Lastly, though not specifically mentioned in "Where to Begin?," Lenin added de facto a third principle to his revolutionary agenda-setting formula shortly after seizing power over Russia in 1917: stifling the formation of political opposition and any alternate political agenda setting by all means necessary.

It is noteworthy to observe that the first two principles of Lenin's theory largely depend on the free will of those hearing the revolutionary message to consider and decide upon what Lenin sought to convey. Consequently, the success of efforts to propagandize and agitate described by Lenin in "What is to be Done?" depended for their effectiveness on the skillful crafting and distribution of persuasive messaging together with alluring



(Graphic by Arin Burgess, *Military Review*)

Figure 4. Party-Focused and Cheka-Compelled Issues

activity. To paraphrase Shaw and McCombs, they were techniques that aimed to narrow the universe of things about which the targeted audience were collectively enticed to think about.

However, Lenin was not satisfied with depending on the free will of an audience to either accept or reject his revolutionary agenda, which would have only left open the possibility of other competing political agendas usurping his own through more appealing and skillful messaging and organization. Hence, the last principle of Lenin's theoretical model is straightforward coercion. Immediately after seizing power over Russia, Lenin instructed the ruthless Bolshevik loyalist Felix Dzerzhinsky to organize the *Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage*. Established on 20 December 1917 under the name *Cheka*, its whole purpose was to prevent political opposition to Bolshevist rule from emerging. Tactics ranged from state-sponsored public ridicule of political opponents, and media seizure and censorship, to vandalism, physical intimidation and attacks, kidnapping, torture, and murder. During Lenin's ensuing Red Terror campaign, estimates range from twelve thousand to two hundred thousand political opponents who were killed as Lenin tightened the noose around the public agenda.[14] And, as the Cheka took steps to crush political opponents, it walked arm in arm with the newly formed state propaganda ministry to ensure that the public agenda was set by Lenin himself and no other. With a disciplined vanguard party, state control of the media through the propaganda ministry, and the Cheka in place, Lenin no longer depended solely on the vagaries of persuasion to shape independent thought and free will among the Russian masses for setting the state agenda (see figure 4).

Subsequently, the Cheka became the model adopted by other socialist and fascist governments, as well as other diverse authoritarian regimes. For example, taking careful note of Lenin's formula, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini established a secret organization with the same mission of squashing political and media opposition after his seizure of power. Not surprisingly, in apparent honor of Lenin, he nicknamed that organization the Cheka.[14] Emulating Mussolini in turn, the National Socialists of Germany established first the Brownshirts, and shortly after that the Gestapo, both influenced by the Italian and Soviet Cheka models.

If Lenin were alive today, what organizations might he recognize as the heirs of the Cheka concept he fathered? The answer is: Cheka-like organizations are today ubiquitous, standard fixtures of every authoritarian state of consequence, including China, Iran, North Korea, Venezuela, and Cuba, among others. And, as

"Brownshirt" storm troopers (*Sturmabteilung*, or SA) burn the black, red, and gold flag of the newly established Weimar Republic 30 January 1933 in the streets of Berlin, Germany. Members of the SA wore distinctive brown uniforms and were frequently employed by officials of the Nazi party to break up the meetings of, and engage in street battles with, their political opponents, especially communists. (Photo courtesy of Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturebesitz [Prussian Cultural Heritage picture archive])

Cheka heirs, they largely operate according to Leninist methodology, principally dedicated to stamping out or preventing the emergence of any hint of political opposition to their respective regimes, no matter how benign or remote a seeming challenge might be.

Perhaps more significant, the specter of Lenin's vindictive ruthlessness toward political opponents has also now become characteristic of many so-called nonviolent political activist groups operating in stable political states in the West. These use Leninist-style intimidation tactics, which, though they may not employ the same levels of violence as used by the Cheka and the Brownshirts, nevertheless reflect Cheka intolerance and methodology in their single-minded efforts to stifle political opposition and the threat of alternate competing agendas emerging from other organizations.

Such coercive tactics increasingly include use of the web and social media for unremitting personalized harassment of individuals. They also include systematic frivolous legal challenges through the courts, harassing demonstrations, picketing, stalking, civil disobedience aimed at unsettling public security and order, vandalism, disruption of public meetings including concerted efforts to prevent political opponents from being able to conduct public rallies or give speeches, and organized public ridicule through the electronic media (especially by co-opting sympathetic entertainment media). Moreover, personal intimidation threats against individuals or family members, sporadic physical attacks, and a variety of other activities that aim to impede a political opponent from effectively organizing and agitating for an alternate political agenda are sometimes also used. For example, recent organized efforts in the United States by diverse groups to disrupt or cause cancellation of various political rallies through violence and threats during the United States' current election cycle illustrate the continuing influence of Lenin's Cheka methodology on domestic community organizing and interest groups.

Supporters of the "Revolutionary Communist Party, USA" burn the U.S. flag outside the gates of the Quicken Loans Arena 20 July 2016 in Cleveland, Ohio. (Photo by Adrees Latif, Reuters)

Conclusion

As military officers look out over the panorama of competing insurgent, terrorist, and aggressive domestic activist causes (including the organizations and techniques behind so-called "Color Revolutions") across the global spectrum, the lesson is that no politically centered movement can long survive without being led by a vanguard party and without control (or the full sympathetic support) of at least one influential medium to organize, propagandize, and agitate for the cause. And, such movements are severely handicapped unless they attain the proactive ability to preclude the emergence of political opposition to them, or to stamp out their political opponents if such do emerge, by either force or harassment and ridicule.

Consequently, in authoritarian or nondemocratic unstable states, the closer a political movement is to achieving the ideal character of being led by a well-organized vanguard party that can influence opinion leaders, that controls at least one influential mass medium, and the greater its means to intimidate (or even crush) political adversaries through violent Cheka-like tactics, the greater the likelihood that that party will have effective control over the state. Similarly, in stable nonauthoritarian political states, the closer a political interest is to the ideal of maintaining collusion between a full-time vanguard party of professional organizers and agitators to lobby and agitate on its behalf and at least one major medium (over which it has virtual control) together with the means to intimidate or silence political competitors using largely diverse tactics of intimidation and harassment, the greater the likelihood that it will be able to dominate and dictate the domestic public agenda of the community or state.

U.S. military officers and senior noncommissioned officers should become familiar with the origin and employment of Lenin's principles and tactics of revolutionary activism as they are frequently employed today by insurgents, authoritarian regimes, and many domestic lobbying and community organizing groups in ways that pose a threat to national security. Moreover,

such activities are often used in tandem with so-called kinetic operations to achieve greater psychological and strategic effects. With such familiarity, military planners will be able to plan and operate more effectively in the current complex environment by understanding how key components of political activism by adversaries are often used in a systematic and synchronized way to achieve political objectives. ■

Notes

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1. Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice,* 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 137; Elihu Katz, "The Two-Step Flow of Communication: An Up-To-Date Report on an Hypothesis," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1957): 61–78 (anniversary issue devoted to twenty years of public opinion research); Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence, The Part Played by People in the flow of Mass Communications* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 31–42.

2. George M. Beal and Joseph M. Bohlen, "The Diffusion Process," supplement to North Central Regional Publication No. 1 of the Agricultural Extension Services, *How Farm People Accept New Ideas, Special Report 15* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University, 1981), accessed 15 August 2016, http://www.soc.iastate.edu/extension/pub/comm/SP15.pdf. The relative influence of opinion leaders as opposed to media was examined in a 1959 study by Iowa State University researchers Joe Bohlen and George Beal, who concluded that shifts in opinion could be explained by an apparent five-step decision-making process observed among groups of farmers considering adoption of a new hybrid corn strain. They noted the steps of the process as awareness, information, or interest; evaluation; trial; and adoption. They concluded that media play an important role in the first two stages (awareness and information or interest); however, they play a less significant role in the last three stages, where opinion leaders communicating through interpersonal contact become the major factors leading to changes in opinion and behavior.

3. Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36(2) (1972): 174, doi:10.1086/267990, provides the first instance of such studies; for more examples see Maxwell E. McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Polity, 2014); see also Donald L. Shaw, Bradley J. Hamm, and Thomas Terry, "Vertical vs. Horizontal Media: Using Agenda-Setting and Audience Agenda-Melding to Create Public Information Strategies in the Emerging Papyrus Society," *Military Review* 86(6) (2006): 13–25.

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