

CSI REPRINT

THE EVOLUTION OF A REVOLT

by T. E. Lawrence

(Late Lieut.-Colonel General Staff, E.E.F.)

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THE EVOLUTION OF A REVOLT

BY T. E. LAWRENCE
(LATE LIEUT.-COLONEL GENERAL STAFF, E.E.F.)

The Arab Revolt began in June, 1916, with an Arab offensive, a surprise attack by the half-armed and inexperienced tribesmen upon the Turkish garrisons in Medina and about Mecca. They had no success, and after a few days' effort they withdrew out of range of the fort artillery, and began a blockade. This method forced the early surrender of Mecca, whose road communications were too long and rough to be held by the Turks. Medina, however, was linked by railway to the Turkish main Army in Syria, and, thanks to their superior numbers and equipment, the Turks were able in a week's fighting to restore the line and reinforce the temporarily-besieged garrison there. The Arab forces which had attacked it fell back gradually as the Turks became more offensive, and at last moved fifty miles south-west into the hills, and there took up a position across the main road to Mecca.

At this point the campaign stood still for many weeks, while both sides breathed, and the Turks prepared to take the initiative, by sending an expeditionary force to Mecca, to crush the revolt where it had started. They moved an army corps to Median by rail, and strengthened it beyond establishment with guns, cars, aeroplanes, machine guns, and quantities of horse, mule and camel transport. Then they began to advance down the main western road from Medina to Mecca. The total distance was about two hundred and fifty

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miles. The first fifty miles were easy: then came a belt of hills twenty miles wide, in which were Feisal's tribesmen standing on the defensive: after the hills was a level stretch, for seventy miles along the coastal plain to Rabegh, rather more than half-way. Rabegh is a little port on the Red Sea, with good anchorage for ships. In it was Sherif Ali, Feisal's eldest brother, with more tribal forces, and the beginnings of an Arab Regular Army, recruited from officers and men of Arab Blood, who had served in the Turkish Army, and were now willing to fight against their old masters for their national freedom.

Our military advisers had told us that Rabegh was the key of Mecca, since no hostile force could pass along the main road without occupying it and watering at its wells under the palm trees. Its defence was therefore of the main importance. The Navy could cooperate effectively from the harbour, and the circle of the palm-groves must be laid out as an entrenched position, and held by regular troops. They thought that Beduin tribesmen would never be of any value in a fixed position, and that therefore an Arab regular force must be formed and trained as soon as possible to undertake this duty. If the Turks advanced before the new force was ready, the British would have to lend a brigade, of British or Allied troops, to save the Sherif in his extremity, by maintaining this stop-block.

A personal reconnaissance of the Arab positions, here and in the hills where Feisal was, caused me to modify the views of the experts slightly. Feisal had some thousands of men, all armed with rifles, rather casual, distrustful fellows, but very active and cheerful. They were posted in hills and defiles of such natural strength that it seemed to me very improbable that the Turks could force them, just by their superior

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numbers: for in some ways it is easier to defend a range of hills against nine or ten thousand men than against nine or ten. Accordingly, I reported that the tribesmen (if strengthened by light machine guns, and regular officers as advisers) should be able to hold up the Turks indefinitely, while the Arab regular force was being created. As was almost inevitable in view of the general course of military thinking since Napoleon, we all looked only to the regulars to win the war. We were obsessed by the dictum of Foch that the ethic of modern war is to seek for the enemy's army, his centre of power, and destroy it in battle. Irregulars would not attack positions and so they seemed to us incapable of forcing a decision.

While we were training the regulars (of course not sending officer or light machine guns to Feisal in the hills meanwhile), the Turks suddenly put my appreciation to the test by beginning their advance on Mecca. They broke through my "impregnable" hills in twenty-four hours, and came forward from them towards Rabegh slowly. So they proved to us the second theorem of irregular war—namely, that irregular troops are as unable to defend a point or line as they are to attack it.

This lesson was received by us quite without gratitude, for the Turkish success put us in a critical position. The Rabegh force was not capable of repelling the attack of a single battalion, much less of a corps. It was nearly impossible to send down British troops from Egypt at the moment: nor do I think that a single British brigade would have been capable of holding all the Rabegh position: nor was the Rabegh position indispensable to the Turks: nor would a single Arab have remained with the Sherif if he introduced British troops into the Hejaz.

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In the emergency it occurred to me that perhaps the virtue of irregulars lay in depth, not in face, and that it had been the threat of attack by them upon the Turkish northern flank which had made the enemy hesitate for so long. The actual Turkish flank ran from their front line to Medina, a distance of some fifty miles: but, if we moved towards the Hejaz railway behind Medina, we might stretch our threat (and, accordingly, their flank) as far, potentially, as Damascus, eight hundred miles away to the north. Such a move would force the Turks to the defensive, and we might regain the initiative. Anyhow, it seemed our only chance, and so, in January, 1917, we took all Feisal's tribesmen, turned our backs on Mecca, Rabegh and the Turks, and marched away north two hundred miles to Wejh, thanks to the help of the British Red Sea Fleet, which fed and watered us along the coast, and gave us gun-power and a landing party at our objective.

This eccentric movement acted like a charm. Clausewitz had said that rearguards modulate the enemy's action like a pendulum, not by what they do, but by their mere existence. We did nothing concrete, but our march recalled the Turks (who were almost into Rabegh) all the way back to Medina, and there they halved their force. One half took up the entrenched position about the city, which they held until after the Armistice. The other half was distributed along the railway to defend it against our threat. For the rest of the war the Turks stood on the defensive against us, and we won advantage over advantage till, when peace came, we had taken thirty-five thousand prisoners, killed and wounded and worn out about as many, and occupied a hundred thousand square miles of the enemy's territory, at little loss to ourselves.

However, we were not then aware that Wejh was our turning point. We thought we had come to it to cut the

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railway, and I was at once sent up country to do this, as a means to take Medina, the Turkish headquarters and main garrison. On the way up I fell ill, and spent ten days on my back in a tent, without anything to do except to think about war and analyse our hitherto empirical practice for its real import.

I was unfortunately as much in charge of the campaign as I pleased, and had had no training in command to fit me for such a work. In military theory I was tolerably read, for curiosity in Oxford years before had taken me past Napoleon to Clausewitz and his school, to Caemmerer and Moltke, Goltz and the recent Frenchmen. These had seemed very partial books, and after a look at Jomini and Willisen I had found broader principles in the eighteenth century, in Saxe, Guibert and their followers. However, Clausewitz was intellectually so much the master of them all that unwillingly I had come to believe in him. Tactically the only campaigns I had studied step by step were the ancient affairs of Hannibal and Belisarius, Mohammed and the Crusades! My interests were only in pure theory and I looked everywhere for the metaphysical side, the philosophy of war, about which I thought a little for some years. Now I was compelled suddenly to action, to find an immediate equation between my book-reading and our present movements.

However, the books gave me the aim in war quite pat, "the destruction of the organized forces of the enemy" by "the one process battle." Victory could only be purchased by blood. This was a hard saying for us, as the Arabs had no organized forces, and so a Turkish Foch would have no aim: and the Arabs would not endure casualties, so that an Arab Clausewitz could not buy his victory. These wise men must be talking metaphors, for we were indubitably winning our

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war . . . and as I thought about it, it dawned on me that we had won the Hejaz war. We were in occupation of 99 per cent. of the Hejaz. The Turks were welcome to the other fraction till peace or doomsday showed them the futility of clinging to our window pane. This part of the war was over, so why bother about Medina? It was no base for us, like Rabegh, no threat to the Turks, like Wejh: just a blind alley for both. The Turks sat in it on the defensive, immobile, eating for food the transport animals which were to have moved them to Mecca, but for which there was no pasture in their now restricted lines. They were harmless sitting there; if we took them prisoner, they would cost us food and guards in Egypt: if we drove them out northward into Syria, they would join the main Army blocking us in Sinai. On all counts they were best where they were, and they valued Medina and wanted to keep it. Let them!

This seemed unlike the ritual of war of which Foch had been priest, and so I began to hope that there was a difference of kind between us and him. He called his modern war "absolute." In it two nations professing incompatible philosophies set out to try them in the light of force. A struggle of two immaterial principles could only end when the supporters of one had no more means of resistance. An opinion can be argued with: a conviction is best shot. The logical end of a war of creeds is the final destruction of one, and Salammbo the classical textbook-instance. These were the lines of the struggle between France and Germany, but not, I thought, between Germany and England, for all efforts to make our men hate the enemy just made them hate war, and later on by the Armistice we made the Great War fall short of the Foch ideal. To me it seemed only a variety of war: and I could then see other sorts, as Clausewitz had

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numbered them, personal wars for dynastic reasons, expulsive wars for party reasons, commercial wars for trading reasons.

Then I thought of the Arab aim, and saw that it was geographical, to occupy all Arabic-speaking lands in Asia. In the doing of it we might kill Turks: we disliked them very much. Yet "killing Turks" would never be an excuse or aim. If they would go quietly, our war would end. If not, we would try to drive them out: in the last resort we would be compelled to the desperate course of blood, on the maxim of "murder" war, but as cheaply as possible for ourselves, since the Arabs were fighting for freedom, a pleasure only to be tasted by a man alive.

My own personal duty was command, and I began to unravel command and analyse it, both from the point of view of strategy, the aim in war, the synoptic regard which sees everything by the standard of the whole, and from the point of view called tactics, the means towards the strategic end, the steps of its staircase. In each I found the same elements, one algebraical, one biological, a third psychological. The first seemed a pure science, subject to the laws of mathematics, without humanity. It dealt with known invariables, fixed conditions, space and time, inorganic things like hills and climates and railways, with mankind in type-masses too great for individual variety, with all artificial aids, and the extensions given our faculties by mechanical invention. It was essentially formulable.

In the Arab case the algebraic factor would take first account of the area we wished to conquer, and I began idly to calculate how many square miles . . . perhaps a hundred and forty thousand . . . and how would the Turks defend all that . . . no doubt by a trench line across the bottom, if we

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were an army attacking with banners displayed . . . but suppose we were an influence (as we might be), an idea, a thing invulnerable, intangible, without front or back, drifting about like a gas? Armies were like plants, immobile as a whole, firm-rooted, nourished through long stems to the head. We might be a vapour, blowing where we listed. Our kingdoms lay in each man's mind, and as we wanted nothing material to live on, so perhaps we offered nothing material to the killing. It seemed a regular soldier might be helpless without a target. He would own the ground he sat on, and what he could poke his rifle at.

Then I estimated how many posts they would need to contain this attack in depth, sedition putting up her head in every unoccupied one of these hundred thousand square miles. I knew the Turkish Army inside and out, and allowing for its recent extension of faculty by guns and aeroplanes and armoured trains, still it seemed it would have need of a fortified post every four square miles, and a post could not be less than twenty men. The Turks would need six hundred thousand men to meet the combined ill wills of all the local Arab people. They had one hundred thousand men available. It seemed the assets in this part of command were ours, and climate, railways, deserts, technical weapons could also be attached to our interests, if we realized our raw materials and were apt with them. The Turk was stupid and would believe that rebellion was absolute, like war, and deal with it on the analogy of absolute warfare. Analogy is fudge, anyhow, and to make war upon rebellion is messy and slow, like eating soup with a knife.

So much for the mathematical element, which I annoyed the others by calling hecastics. The second factor was biological, the breaking-point, life and death, or better, wear

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and tear. Bionomics seemed a good name for it. The war-philosophers had properly made it an art, and had elevated one item in it, "effusion of blood," to the height of a principle. It became humanity in battle, an art touching every side of our corporal being, and very war. There was a line of variability (man) running through all its estimates. Its components were sensitive and illogical, and generals guarded themselves by the device of a reserve, the significant medium of their art. Goltz had said that when you know the enemy's strength, and he is fully deployed, then you know enough to dispense with a reserve. But this is never. There is always the possibility of accident, of some flaw in materials, present in the general's mind: and the reserve is unconsciously held to meet it. There is a "felt" element in troops, not expressible in figures, guessed at by the equivalent of δόξα in Plato, and the greatest commander is he whose intuitions most nearly happen. Nine-tenths of tactics are certain, and taught in books: but the irrational tenth is like the kingfisher flashing across the pool, and that is the test of generals. It can only be ensured by instinct, sharpened by thought practising the stroke so often that at the crisis it is as natural as a reflex.

Yet to limit the art to humanity seemed to me an undue narrowing down. It must apply to materials as much as to organisms. In the Turkish Army materials were scarce and precious, men more plentiful than equipment. Consequently our cue should be to destroy not the Army but the materials. The death of a Turkish bridge or rail, machine or gun, or high explosive was more profitable to us than the death of a Turk. The Arab Army just now was equally chary of men and materials: of men because they being irregulars were not units, but individuals, and an individual casualty is like a pebble dropped in water: each may make only a brief hole,

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but rings of sorrow widen out from them. We could not afford casualties. Materials were easier to deal with and put straight. It was our obvious duty to make ourselves superior in some one branch, gun-cotton or machine guns, or whatever could be made most decisive. Foch had laid down the maxim, applying it to men, of being superior at the critical point and moment of attack. We might apply it to materials, and be superior in equipment in one dominant moment or respect.

For both men and things we might try to give Foch's doctrine a negative twisted side, for cheapness' sake, and be weaker than the enemy everywhere except in one point or matter. Most wars are wars of contact, both forces striving to keep in touch to avoid tactical surprise. Our war should be a war of detachment: we were to contain the enemy by the silent threat of a vast unknown desert, not disclosing ourselves till the moment of attack. This attack need be only nominal, directed not against his men, but against his materials: so it should not seek for his main strength or his weaknesses, but for his most accessible material. In railway cutting this would be usually an empty stretch of rail. That was a tactical success. We might turn the average into a rule (not a law—war is antinomian, said Colin), and at length we developed an unconscious habit of never engaging the enemy at all. This chimed with the numerical plea of never giving the enemy's soldier a target. Many Turks on our front had no chance all the war to fire a shot at us, and correspondingly we were never on the defensive, except by rare accident. The corollary of such a rule was perfect "intelligence," so that we could plan in complete certainty. The chief agent had to be the general's head (de Feuquière said this first), and his knowledge had to be faultless, leaving no room for chance. We took more pains in this service than any other staff I saw.

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The third factor in command seemed to be the psychological, that science (Xenophon called it diathetic) of which our propaganda is a stained and ignoble part. Some of it concerns the crowd, the adjustment of spirit to the point where it becomes fit to exploit in action, the prearrangement of a changing opinion to a certain end. Some of it deals with individuals, and then it becomes a rare art of human kindness, transcending, by purposeful emotion, the gradual logical sequence of our minds. It considers the capacity for mood of our men, their complexities and mutability, and the cultivation of what in them profits the intention. We had to arrange their minds in order of battle, just as carefully and as formally as other officers arranged their bodies: and not only our own men's minds, though them first: the minds of the enemy, so far as we could reach them: and thirdly, the mind of the nation supporting us behind the firing-line, and the mind of the hostile nation waiting the verdict, and the neutrals looking on.

It was the ethical in war, and the process on which we mainly depended for victory on the Arab front. The printing press is the greatest weapon in the armoury of the modern commander, and we, being amateurs in the art of command, began our war in the atmosphere of the twentieth century, and thought of our weapons without prejudice, not distinguishing one from another socially. The regular officer has the tradition of forty generations of serving soldiers behind him, and to him the old weapons are the most honoured. We had seldom to concern ourselves with what our men did, but much with what they thought, and to us the diathetic was more than half command. In Europe it was set a little aside and entrusted to men outside the General Staff. In Asia we were so weak physically that we could not let the

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metaphysical weapon rust unused. We had won a province when we had taught the civilians in it to die for our ideal of freedom: the presence or absence of the enemy was a secondary matter.

These reasonings showed me that the idea of assaulting Medina, or even of starving it quickly into surrender was not in accord with our best strategy. We wanted the enemy to stay in Medina, and in every other harmless place, in the largest numbers. The factor of food would eventually confine him to the railways, but he was welcome to the Hejaz railway, and the Trans-Jordan railway, and the Palestine and Damascus and Aleppo railways for the duration of the war, so long as he gave us the other nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of the Arab world. If he showed a disposition to evacuate too soon, as a step to concentrating in the small area which his numbers could dominate effectively, then we would have to try and restore his confidence, not harshly, but by reducing our enterprises against him. Our ideal was to keep his railway just working, but only just, with the maximum of loss and discomfort to him.

Accordingly, I put in a few damages to the line, enough to annoy the enemy without making him fear its final destruction, and then rode back to Wejh, to explain to my chiefs that the Arab war was geographical, and the Turkish Army for us an accident, not a target. Our aim was to seek its weakest link, and bear only on that till time made the mass of it fall. Our largest available resources were the tribesmen, men quite unused to formal warfare, whose assets were movement, endurance, individual intelligence, knowledge of the country, courage. We must impose the longest possible passive defence on the Turks (this being the most materially expensive form of war) by extending our own front to its

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maximum. Tactically we must develop a highly mobile, highly equipped type of army, of the smallest size, and use it successively at distributed points of the Turkish line, to make the Turks reinforce their occupying posts beyond the economic minimum of twenty men. The power of this striking force of ours would not be reckoned merely by its strength. The ratio between number and area determined the character of the war, and by having five times the mobility of the Turks we could be on terms with them with one-fifth their number.

Our success was certain, to be proved by paper and pencil as soon as the proportion of space and number had been learned. The contest was not physical, but mineral, and so battles were a mistake. All we won in a battle was the ammunition the enemy fired off. Our victory lay not in battles, but in occupying square miles of country. Napoleon had said it was rare to find generals willing to fight battles. The curse of this war was that so few could do anything else. Napoleon had spoken in angry reaction against the excessive finesse of the eighteenth century, when men almost forgot that war gave licence to murder. We had been swinging out on his dictum for a hundred years, and it was time to go back a bit again. Battles are impositions on the side which believes itself weaker, made unavoidable either by lack of land-room, or by the need to defend a material property dearer than the lives of soldiers. We had nothing material to lose, so we were to defend nothing and to shoot nothing. The precious element of our forces were the Beduin irregulars, and not the regulars whose rôle would only be to occupy places to which the irregulars had already given access. Our cards were speed and time, not hitting power, and these gave us strategical rather than tactical strength. Range is more to strategy than

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force. The invention of bully-beef has modified land-war more profoundly than the invention of gunpowder.

My chiefs did not follow all these arguments, but gave me leave to try my hand after my own fashion. We went off first to Akaba, and took it easily. Then we took Tafileh and the Dead Sea: then Azrak and Deraa, and finally Damascus, all in successive stages worked out consciously on these sick-bed theories. The process was to set up ladders of tribes, giving us a safe and comfortable route from our sea-bases (Yenbo, Wejh or Akaba) to our advanced bases of operation. These were sometimes three hundred miles away, a long distance in lands without railways or roads, but made short for us by an assiduous cultivation of desert-power, control by camel parties of the desolate and unmapped wilderness which fills up all the centre of Arabia, from Mecca to Aleppo and Bagdad.

In character these operations were more like naval warfare than ordinary land operations, in their mobility, their ubiquity, their independence of bases and communications, their lack of ground features, of strategic areas, of fixed directions, of fixed points. "He who commands the sea is at great liberty, and may take as much or as little of the war as he will": he who commands the desert is equally fortunate. Camel raiding-parties, as self-contained as ships, could cruise without danger along any part of the enemy's land-frontier, just out of sight of his posts along the edge of cultivation, and tap or raid into his lines where it seemed fittest or easiest or most profitable, with a sure retreat always behind them into an element which the Turks could not enter. We were fortified in our freedom of movement by an intimate knowledge of the desert-front of Syria, a country peculiarly and historically indefensible against attack from the east. I had traversed most of it on foot before the war many times,

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working out the movements of Saladin or Ibrahim Pasha, and, as our war-experience deepened, we became adepts at that form of geographical intuition, described by Bourcet as wedding unknown land to known in a mental map.

Our tactics were always tip and run, not pushes, but strokes. We never tried to maintain or improve an advantage, but to move off and strike again somewhere else. We used the smallest force, in the quickest time, at the farthest place. If the action had continued till the enemy had changed his dispositions to resist it, we would have been breaking the spirit of our fundamental rule of denying him targets.

The necessary speed and range were attained by the extreme frugality of the desert men, and their high efficiency when mounted on their she-riding-camels. The camel is an intricate animal, and calls for skilled labour in the handling: but she yields a remarkable return. We had no system of supply: each man was self-contained and carried on the saddle from the sea base at which the raid started, six weeks' food for himself. The six-weeks' ration for ordinary men was a half-bag of flour, forty-five pounds in weight. Luxurious feeders carried some rice also for variety. Each man baked for himself, kneading his own flour into unleavened cakes, and warming it in the ashes of a fire. We carried about a pint of drinking water each, since the camels required to come to water on average every three days, and there was no advantage in our being richer than our mounts. Some of us never drank between wells, but those were hardy men: most of us drank a lot at each well, and had a drink during the intermediate dry day. In the heat of summer Arabian camels will do about two hundred and fifty miles comfortably between drinks: and this represented three days' vigorous marching. The country is not so dry as it is painted, and this

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radius was always more than we needed. Wells are seldom more than one hundred miles apart. An easy day's march was fifty miles: an emergency march might be up to one hundred and ten miles in the day.

The six weeks' food gave us a range of over a thousand miles out and home, and that (like the pint of water) was more than ever we needed, even in so large a country as Arabia. It was possible (for me, the camel-novice in the Army, "painful" was a better word) to ride fifteen hundred miles in the month without re-victualling, and there was never a fear of starvation, for each of us was riding on two hundred pounds of potential meat, and when food lacked we would stop and eat the weakest of our camels. Exhausted camel is poor food, but cheaper killing than a fat one, and we had to remember that our future efficiency depended on the number of good camels at our disposal. They lived on grazing as we marched (we never gave them grain or fodder), and after their six weeks on the road they would be worn thin, and have to be sent to pasture for some months' rest, while we called out another tribe in replacement, or found fresh riding-beasts.

We did not hamper ourselves with led-camels. The men carried with them a hundred rounds of ammunition and a rifle, or else two men would be an "automatic" team, dividing the gun and its drums between them. They slept as they were, in their riding cloaks, and fared well enough till the winter of 1917–1918, which caught us on the five-thousand foot hills of Edom behind the Dead Sea. Then we lost many men and camels frozen to death, or trapped in the snow, which lay over all the highlands in deep drifts for weeks, while we vainly appealed to Egypt for tents and boots and blankets. In reply we were advised that Arabia was a tropical country!

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The equipment of the raiding parties aimed at simplicity, with nevertheless a technical superiority over the Turks in the most critical department. We had great quantities of light machine guns, used not as machine guns, but as automatic rifles, snipers' tools, by men kept deliberately in ignorance of their mechanism, so that the speed of action would not be hampered by attempts at repair. If a gun jammed, the gunner had to throw it away, and go on with his rifle. We made another special feature of high explosives, and nearly every one in the revolt was qualified by rule of thumb experience in demolition work. We invented special methods of our own, for rapid work under fire, in the course of our months of practice, and before the end were dealing with any quantity of track and bridges economically and safely.

On some occasions we strengthened tribal raids by armoured cars, manned by Englishmen. Armoured cars, once they have found a possible track can keep up with a camel party. They are, however, cumbrous and shorter-ranged, because of the difficulty of carrying petrol. Therefore we seldom used them more than a hundred miles from home. On the march to Damascus, when we were nearly four hundred miles off our base, we first maintained them by a baggage train of petrol-laden camels, and afterwards by the help of the Air Force were able to give them further supplies by Handley-Page. Cars are magnificent fighting machines, and decisive whenever they can come into action on their own conditions. But though each has for main principle that of "fire in movement," yet the tactical employments of cars and camel-corps are so different that I do not recommend their being used in joint operations, except in very special circumstances. We found it demoralizing to both, to use armoured and unarmoured cavalry together.

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The distribution of the raiding parties was unorthodox. It was impossible to mix or combine tribes, since they disliked or distrusted one another. Likewise we could not use the men of one tribe in the territory of another. In consequence, we aimed at the widest distribution of forces, in order to have the greatest number of raids on hand at once, and we added fluidity to their ordinary speed, by using one district on Monday, another on Tuesday, a third on Wednesday. This much reinforced their natural mobility. It gave us priceless advantages in pursuit, for the force renewed itself with fresh men in every new tribal area, and gave us always our pristine energy. Maximum disorder was in a real sense our equilibrium.

The internal economy of the raiding parties was equally curious. We aimed at maximum articulation. We were serving a common ideal, without tribal emulation, and so we could not hope for any *esprit de corps* to reinforce our motives. Soldiers are made a caste either by being given great pay and rewards in money, uniform, or political privileges; or, as in England, by being made outcasts, cut off from their fellows by contempt. We could not knit man to man, for our tribesmen were in arms willingly, by conviction. There have been many armies enlisted voluntarily: there have been few armies serving voluntarily under such trying conditions, for so long a war as ours. Any of the Arabs could go home whenever the conviction failed him. Our only contract was honour.

Consequently we had no discipline, in the sense in which it is restrictive, submergent of individuality, the lowest common denominator of men. In regular armies in peace it means the limit of energy attainable by everybody present: it is the hunt not of an average, but of an absolute, a

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100-per-cent. standard, in which the ninety-nine stronger men are played down to the level of the worst. The aim is to render the unit a unit, and the man a type, in order that their effort shall be calculable, their collective output even in grain and in bulk. The deeper the discipline, the lower the individual efficiency, and the more sure the performance. It is a deliberate sacrifice of capacity in order to reduce the uncertain element, the bionomic factor, in enlisted humanity, and its accompaniment is *compound* or social war, that form in which the man in the fighting line has to be the product of the multiplied exertions of the long hierarchy, from workshop to supply unit, which maintains him in the field.

The Arab war was *simple* and individual. Every enrolled man served in the line of battle, and was self-contained. We had no lines of communication or labour troops. The efficiency of each man was his personal efficiency. We thought that in our condition of warfare the sum yielded by single men would be at least equal to the product of a compound system, and it was certainly easier to adjust to tribal life and manners, given elasticity and understanding on the part of the commanding officers. Fortunately for our chances nearly every young Englishman has the roots of eccentricity in him, and so we got on well enough. Of course we used very few Englishmen in the field, not more than one per thousand of the Arab troops. A larger proportion would have created friction, just because they were foreign bodies (pearls if you please) in the oyster: and those who were present controlled by influence and advice, by their superior knowledge, not by an extraneous authority.

In practice we did not employ in the firing line the greater numbers which the adoption of a "simple" system put theoretically at our disposal. We preferred to use them in

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relay: otherwise our attack would have become too extended. Each man had to have liberal work-room. In irregular war if two men are together one is being wasted. The moral strain of isolated action makes this simple form of war very exacting on the individual soldier, and demands from him special initiative, endurance and enthusiasm. Our ideal was to make action a series of single combats. Napoleon, in his pregnant valuation of the Mamelukes in terms of French soldiers, first gave me the idea: Ardant du Picq widened its application: the prejudices of historians are generally the richest part of their histories. Our value depended entirely on our quality, not on our quantity. We had to keep always cool, for the excitement of a blood-lust would impair the science of our combatants, and our victory depended on our just use of speed, concealment, accuracy of fire. Irregular war is far more intellectual than a bayonet charge.

The illiteracy of our forces was not harmful, since we worked intentionally in these small numbers and explained our plan verbally to every one. Their very illiteracy has trained them to a longer memory and a closer hearing of the news. Nor were our tactics too subtle, for they had to be translated into independent action through the heads of our followers, and success was impossible unless most of them used their intelligence to forward our conception against the moral and material accidents of the path. This dilution of tactical ability to the level of the lowest interpreter was regrettable, but not all loss. The only alternative would be independent enterprise, and a mediocre design, persisted in, is grander than a series of brilliant expedients and will overcome them in the end.

By careful persistence, kept strictly within our strength and following the spirit of our theories, we were able

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eventually to reduce the Turks to helplessness, and complete victory seemed to be almost within our sight when General Allenby by his immense stroke in Palestine threw the enemy's main forces into hopeless confusion and put an immediate end to the Turkish war. We were very happy to have done with all our pains, but sometimes since I have felt a private regret that his too-greatness deprived me of the opportunity of following to the end the dictum of Saxe that a war might be won without fighting battles. It was an irony of fate to entrust this side-show of a side-show, with its opportunity of proving or disproving the theory, to an outsider like myself, not qualified technically to make the best of it. I would have given so much to show that Saxe was the greatest master of his kind of war, but now all I can say is that we worked by his light for two years, and the work stood. This is a pragmatic argument that cannot be wholly derided.

Unfortunately our campaigns lacked a historian as much as an executant. Now that I try to write down what we did, and why, some of our principles look truisms (mankind would so rather believe a sophism) and some look contradictory. The fault must be either in my exposition or in my observation. Savage warfare seems never to have been thought out in English from the savage point of view, and the Arab revolt would have been a great opportunity for a thinker to test its possibilities on a grand scale. Our war was so odd and so far away that coy Authority left us to ourselves. We had no base machinery, no formal staff, no clerks, no government, no telegraphs, no public opinion, no troops of British nationality, no honour, no conventions. The experiment was a thrilling one, which took all our wits. We believed we would prove irregular war or rebellion to be an exact science, and an inevitable success, granted certain

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factors and if pursued along certain lines. We did not prove it, because the war stopped: but here the thesis is:–

It seemed that rebellion must have an unassailable base, something guarded not merely from attack, but from the fear of it: such a base as we had in the Red Sea Ports, the desert, or in the minds of the men we converted to our creed. It must have a sophisticated alien enemy, in the form of a disciplined army of occupation too small to fulfil the doctrine of acreage: too few to adjust number to space, in order to dominate the whole area effectively from fortified posts. It must have a friendly population, not actively friendly, but sympathetic to the point of not betraying rebel movements to the enemy. Rebellions can be made by 2 per cent. active in a striking force, and 98 per cent. passively sympathetic. The few active rebels must have the qualities of speed and endurance, ubiquity and independence of arteries of supply. They must have the technical equipment to destroy or paralyse the enemy's organized communications, for irregular war is fairly Willisen's definition of strategy, "the study of communication" in its extreme degree, of attack where the enemy is not. In fifty words: Granted mobility, security (in the form of denying targets to the enemy), time, and doctrine (the idea to convert every subject to friendliness), victory will rest with the insurgents, for the algebraical factors are in the end decisive, and against them perfections of means and spirit struggle quite in vain.

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