

Principles of Warfare Culminating Seminar

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Background:

In Fall, 1946, in a Hanoi Colonial office a French general spoke with a Vietnamese guerilla war leader. The French general was there to reclaim French sovereignty over Indo-China back from the Japanese after WWII. He asked the Vietnamese leader what Principles of War he used in his war against the Japanese. The guerilla said that his bible had been T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

Many of Lawrence's concepts on insurgencies can be found in *The Evolution of a Revolt*, a short paper that has been posted as a reprint by Combined Arms Research Library at the U.S. Army Command & General Staff College. Versions are available both in pdf <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/carl/download/csipubs/lawrence.pdf> and a searchable, read-friendly version <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/carl/resources/csi/Lawrence/lawrence.asp>

The speaker noted he would cover how T.E. Lawrence saw the Principles of War in the insurgent warfare of his time, how they appear in the face of today's conflicts, and some principles relating to counter-insurgency

Principles of War are only a set of teachings – rules of thumb – to help guide actions

- They need to be taught otherwise they are only platitudes
- Chap 33 of the *Pillars* goes into some detail
 - Most important piece of military writing
 - The real problem between conventional and unconventional warfare
 - Yeoman warriors fight as regulars
 - Irregulars are really more like raiders with a raiding ethos
 - Lawrence saw Arabs are ideal for this role
 - Western forces at the time were obsessed with the battle of annihilation
 - The idea was destroy the enemy and go home
 - According to Lawrence, the Arabs were not fighting that battle
 - They assumed that if they were not losing then they must be winning
 - It was not in the Arab's interest to go for annihilation
 - The point was to occupy as much ground as possible

T. E. Lawrence's categories related to insurgency

- Algebraic – Lawrence calculated the area that needed to be controlled
 - Arabs did not have the number of troops to control that area

- They would have needed 600,000 but had only 100,000
- Biological – involving the breaking-point, life and death / wear and tear
 - Exhaustion, not destruction is what would bring down the Arabs
 - There needed to be swift raids and destructions of supplies
 - The key would be having perfect information
- Psychological – insuring that the real battle was in the minds of people
 - Need moral support of the populace
 - Need to arrange minds long before arranging bodies on battlefields
 - Exhaustion again becomes key

Lawrence's Camel War concept

- Lacked technology so went to camels to provide mobility
 - Could carry them to strategic depth of the enemy
- Camels could carry enough supplies for six weeks
 - They could go without water for 250 miles or three days
- Gave the Arabs an effective range of 1000 miles
- Each warrior served individually
 - No lines of communication to worry about
 - Coverage was more like a gas cloud spreading out over the area

T.E. Lawrence's Principles of Insurgency

- Successful guerillas need safe bases, including psychological ones – support of at least some of the populace
- Need a technological, sophisticated enemy whose comms and logistics lines provide them opportunities
- Enemy must be weak in numbers so that they cannot fill the entire territory
- Guerillas need at least tacit support of the population – probably as little as 20%
- Speed, endurance, presence, logistic independence
- Need enough weaponry to attack the enemy

Characteristics of *raiders* – what we know about insurgents

1. Always offensive but never swift
2. News media is his to manipulate
3. Always in smallest possible units of action which also helps them survive
4. Ratio of enemy troops to territory must not be too high
5. All raids become precision strikes because they are so small.
6. Since insurgency are like a fluid or a bee hive, it will be network centric by nature

How do you defeat insurgency?

1. Need to think like the insurgents – like raiders, not conventional forces
2. Need speed, shock, endurance (of logistics and will)
3. Need unblinking eyes of persistent surveillance and targeting
4. Present no obvious pattern or organizational structures

5. Strategy of inoculation – organize forces into small units to “vaccinate” local population
6. Separate the raiders from the local populace somehow
7. Remember that one dollar may equal ten bullets
 - a. Most people actually can be bought for some fee
 - b. Bribery can be a weapon

Leadership issues

- Insurgencies are most vulnerable to failed leadership
- TEL noted that leaders need to have wisdom, courage, humanity and especially empathy
 - Need to identify with the individual insurgents
 - Need to place self inside them and know what their limits are
 - Each insurgent must act as if his leader was by his side all time
 - Leaders must empathize with the local population, too
 - Successful insurgent leaders must always be enablers
 - Must make sure that fighters have what they need – including teaching basic skills
 - Must act as a catalyst

British military writer B.H. Littlehart also used T. E. Lawrence as a source. He noted that men are not born to genius – that comes from study, understanding and concentration

- Lawrence’s understanding came from years of studying military history at Oxford

No group that is strong uses insurgency tactics

- Use insurgency tactics to protect the number of fighters you have

Comments from the Q&A Session:

Lawrence’s likely views on terror and problems the military would face today

- The idea of terror is relative
 - Insurgency raids could be seen as terror attacks by victims
- There was no sense of urban fighting at the time
 - Bedouins were not use to dealing with cities
- Suicide attacks would have gone against Lawrence’s concepts
 - He would have considered them unnecessary wastes of precious number of troops
- Lawrence also did not have to deal with the media at that time