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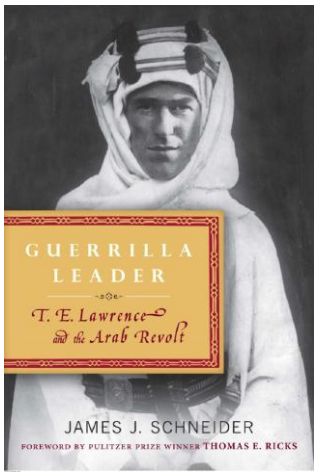

James J. Schneider, Guerrilla Leader: T.E. Lawrence and the Arab Revolt. New York, NY: Bantam Books, 2011.

Bruce E. Stanley

James J. Schneider is Professor Emeritus of Military Theory formerly at the School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Schneider has written extensively on military theory. He is best known for his original work on the development of the theory of operational art, which heavily influenced the education and doctrine of the US Army from the mid-1980's to the present. Schneider is currently working on the theory of strategic design. His work on military theory, the theory of operational art, and strategic leadership are the lens through which Schneider analyzes T.E. Lawrence as a guerrilla leader during

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the Arab Revolt. The narrative that Schneider presents covers Lawrence's experience as a British military advisor to the Arab Revolt from October 1916 to September 1918.

The author asserts that "to the extent that Lawrence had any kind of impression among the military – any military – it was when he resonated with a particular kind of rare officer; the military intellectual who saw Seven Pillars of Wisdom [Lawrence's autobiographical account of the period] and other writings as a psychological and intellectual window into the mind of a desert warrior and guerrilla leader" (xxi-xxii). As such, the author's goal is to examine Lawrence's crucial role in the early transformation of the Middle East while he lead the Arab revolt against the Turkish Empire.

In Guerrilla Leader, Schneider describes Lawrence's role as a British military advisor to the Arab Revolt, beginning with his arrival in Jeddah in late 1916 through to the capture of Damascus in 1918. Although the book is titled Guerrilla Leader, Schneider reveals that Lawrence's success relied on his ability to influence more than command. Thus for Schneider, the combination of energy, courage, and curiosity underpinned Lawrence's desire to learn and are what enabled Lawrence to win the confidence and acceptance of the Arab people. For Schneider, Lawrence was an intellectual warrior.

The author acknowledges that the book is based on extensive research in primary and secondary sources; however, he does not use extensive footnotes, disputations, or tables. He suggests that for the sake of readability he uses a narrative approach to produce a seamless story. Thus, some scholars will be disappointed if they are expecting the author to reveal new archival sources.

Schneider relies on Lawrence's own words, primarily from Seven Pillars of Wisdom, as the point of departure for the analysis and evaluation of the Arab Revolt. From this, Schneider explains how Lawrence led a revolution in military art by overturning the accepted military paradigm based on conventional military operations to reveal that Arab forces could conduct irregular warfare under modern industrial conditions. Lawrence based his argument on two premises: that the Arabs were unable to defend a position against conventional attacks from the Turks; and that the Arabs were incapable of effectively attacking conventionally defended positions. Thus, the traditional western obsession with the strategy of annihilation must be replaced with a strategy of exhaustion. Lawrence observed that while the Arabs were not winning, neither were the Arabs losing. Schneider asserts that what Lawrence proposed was "a lens-smashing alternative" and "heretical in the extreme" (58). Schneider uses heresy in the positive sense, which is to say that Lawrence regarded the emerging operational reality as a potential for transformation based on how the Arabs conducted military

operations. In essence, Lawrence intended to exploit the Arabs' inherent military advantage as a "desert raider." He recognized that the Arabs could use the vast space of the desert to maneuver undetected by an enemy focused on the static defense of major cities. Schneider spends much of his time in the first several chapters making this argument, while the remainder of the book focuses on how the Arabs implemented Lawrence's strategy of exhaustion.

However, the book's narrative reveals Lawrence's struggle to serve two masters: the Arab Revolt and the British Army. Schneider asserts that Lawrence felt a sense of betrayal to the Arabs because he had to lie about the true intentions of British imperial interests. Schneider punctuates his narrative by highlighting the psychological implications of this guilt on Lawrence's leadership ability, concluding that this guilt would stay with him until the very end of his life.

Guerrilla Leader reveals three amazing facts: British gold was an essential factor in sustaining the Arab Revolt; the pervasiveness of internal Arab jealousy and feuds; and the central role of Lieutenant-General Sir Edmund Henry Hynman Allenby. First, it is clear that British gold was as important, if not more important, than Arab nationalism. A consistent theme revealed by Schneider is the amount of British gold doled out to the leaders of the Arab revolt to ensure their continued participation in the conflict. Second, Schneider highlights Lawrence's frustration with the constant feuding among the Arab leaders. He concludes that it became virtually impossible to integrate or amalgamate the various tribes. Reflecting on the military implications, Lawrence expressed that "I am tired of these Arabs; petty incarnate Semites who attained heights and depths beyond our reach, though not beyond our sight" (266). To emphasize his disgust with the Arabs, Lawrence concluded that "Conduct of the war in France would have been harder if each division, almost each brigade, of our army hated every other with a deadly hatred and fought when they met suddenly" (290). Third, there was no strategic coherence between the Arab Revolt and British operations in Egypt until General Allenby assumed command of Palestine. Allenby recognized the military opportunities once the Arabs seized Aqaba. Schneider points out that Lawrence then ceased to be a sideshow and the Arab irregular operations were linked to British conventional operations in Palestine.

Chapter three, titled "A Flash of Genius," is the most unique aspect of the book. Schneider analyzes the logic behind Lawrence's strategy of exhaustion. It is here that the author outlines the basic theses and hypotheses that Lawrence used to argue for his operational approach to guerrilla warfare. Additionally, the author describes Lawrence's subversive leadership style and approach that enabled him to influence the

leaders of the Arab Revolt. Schneider offers a post mortem on the Turkish strategy and offers some possible alternatives that the Turks could have employed to defeat the Arab insurgency. Military theorists and practitioners will find this chapter particularly interesting when compared to other theories on guerrilla warfare.

One major drawback of the book is the lack of maps that represent the operational area where Lawrence conducted his military operations. Those readers unfamiliar with the Arabian Peninsula, Jordon, Palestine, and Syria will find Schneider's narrative difficult to follow, particularly the battles described in the book. In his defense, a cursory search of the internet reveals a paucity of maps of the Palestine Front and virtually none that depict the battles of the Arab Front. Perhaps the recognition that there is a gap in the availability of accurate historical maps of the region may motivate the military history profession to action soon.

Guerrilla Leader will certainly appeal to military professionals interested in the art of leadership. Furthermore, this same audience will find familiar Lawrence's insights on advising Arab military leaders – both the rewards and frustrations. Scholars of military history, particularly those interested in taking a broader view of World War I, will appreciate Schneider's analysis of the importance of the Palestine Front in general, and the strategic value of defeating Turkey in particular. Guerrilla Leader will also appeal to the general reading audience. Schneider does a nice job of placing his narrative of Lawrence within the strategic context of World War I, allowing those familiar with the movie *Lawrence of Arabia* to better understand Lawrence's role in the Arab Revolt.

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