

## Thomas Edward Lawrence: The Hoodwinker

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Thomas Edward Lawrence is a British Imperial Hero and a spy during the First World War. There is no doubt that the consequences of the First World War are still with us.<sup>1</sup> Lawrence is one of the architects of the present geography of the Middle East which was the consequence of the war. Lawrence was made into a legend by the media; repeated news, articles, raising queries about him, attempts to interview him, rumours, books, film and top tales by panegyric authors. The power of the so called fourth state of the realm, gave him titles like 'Prince of Mecca', 'Uncrowned King of Damascus' and 'Lawrence of Arabia'. His personality, his calculated behaviour and queer attitudes have forced him to be regarded and promoted by the Imperial forces to be a legend. The fall of Khilafat-i- Usmania; following the First World War has affected, not only Muslim but almost the whole of the world and have initiated a huge struggle in Indian subcontinent of 'Tahreek-i-Khilafat'. In the Western world about thirty books have been written about the personality of Lawrence.<sup>2</sup> There have been publications in Arabic language which have been limited to Middle East and almost unknown. In addition there have been few English language publication by Arab authors about him, they have only received a limited exposure. These will be discussed further in this article. Not much has been written in the subcontinent of India about the part he played in this world crisis, though there has been huge upheaval and political turmoil because of loss of Muslim Khilafat of Turkey which has its established roots since the fifteenth century. It is thus worth to re-view the so called strange life and actions of T. E. Lawrence.

ANCESTRY: He was born in the Chapman family, settlers in Northern Ireland. They were granted land by the English invaders in 1609, during reign of King James I. These settlers were mainly Protestant Christians from England and southern Scotland. Northern Ireland keeps erupting in

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violence even now, because of the usurpation of local Catholic Christian who struggle for their freedom from the English hegemony. His father Thomas Robert Chapman was a landowner, who has four daughters. Mrs Chapman was a staunch Christian. They had a house keeper to look after the four daughters. The father developed secret relations with the maid; Sarah Maden, left his wife and migrated to England with the maid and changed his name to Lawrence. As he was unable to get divorce from the wife, divorce being very difficult and costly in those days, he was unable to marry the maid, thus all the five boys, born to him from the maid were illegitimate. Moving out of Northern Ireland, they moved from place to place, they stayed in Wales, England and France, ultimately settling in Oxford where the boys were brought up.<sup>3</sup>

**CHILDHOOD & ADOLESCENCE:** Thomas Edward Lawrence was born in Tremadoc, north Wales in 1888, (he was born on 16 August, but claimed 15 of August as his date of birth because that was the birth date of Napoleon,<sup>4</sup> one of his heroes). He was the second of the five sons born to Sarah Maden. His mother was strict in their upbringing, asking for unquestioned obedience. If any resistance was shown by independent minded Thomas, who at home was called Ned, to her mother's orders, it was dealt with beating him on his bare buttocks. He was a precocious child who attained his grades fairly smoothly and was interested in history of Christianity and in ancient languages like Latin and Greek. He studied the life of Saints.<sup>5</sup> 'Acting was an integral part of his temperament. One could never be sure whether he was serious or merely affected for affection's sake.'<sup>6</sup> In summers of 1906/7/8, he studied castles in France. When he was 21 years of age he travelled to Syria, alone, studying Crusader Castles for his graduate thesis for Oxford's Jesus College. From early age he used to visit Ashmolean museum in Oxford and was noticed by imperialists, especially D. G. Hogarth, the keeper of the museum, who supported and guided him in early parts of his life. Lawrence in later life says that Hogarth has 'weighty judgement. He had a delicate sense of value, and would present clearly to us the forces hidden behind the lousy rags and festering skins which we knew as Arabs. Hogarth was our referee, and our untiring historian, who gave us his great knowledge and careful wisdom'.<sup>7</sup>

By the time of adulthood Lawrence was of short stature. His head was large in proportion to his body. According to his mother at school he had a fight with a boy in which he broke his leg and stopped growing.<sup>8</sup>

Medically this is not feasible as the fracture was in one leg only which cannot stop growth of whole body. Tensions have been known in the family, being head strong he slipped away once, and enlisted as private soldier. Soon his father learnt about his folly, brought him back and made a two bedroomed bungalow at the bottom of the garden of their house for him,<sup>9</sup> to give him independence.

**CRUSADER & COVERT ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES:** As he has been to Syria studying Crusader castles, he was chosen with the help of Hogarth to be sent to Carchemish (Jerablus) next to river Euphrates (present Syria). This area was part of Turkish Khilafat. Turks were building a railway, with close cooperation of Germans from Constantinople to Baghdad. The place of interest was the Euphrates where a bridge was being constructed by German engineers, and it was important to keep an eye on the activity by the Imperial Britain. To justify it as an archaeological activity; the Imperial majesty applied to Turkish authorities to excavate the archaeological site at Carchemish where some artefacts have been found belonging to Hittite civilization. Lawrence worked there under various bosses, Hogarth, Campbell Thomson and Wooley until spring of 1914. Was he doing archaeological excavations or was he involved in espionage is clear from a letter to his mother. He writes 'my camera is proving a good one: and the telephoto has been used several times of late. It acts (at a couple of miles) rather better than the naked eye'. 'One may well wonder what Lawrence was doing with a telephoto lens at a stage in the development of photography when such things were rather rare and expensive'.<sup>10</sup>

In the year 1911 Kitchener, Governor of Egypt, thought the war was inevitable. He felt it essential to protect Suez Canal which was under British rule, and ordered Sinai Peninsula to be explored covertly under Palestine Exploration Fund. To cover this espionage activity; a survey team was built up and to provide an archaeological cover the two archaeologists were attached to the team. Lawrence and Woolley passed summer of 1914 in the hot burning Sinai and later compiled a book on it, called 'Wilderness of Zin'. Lawrence wrote to his mother; 'to give an archaeological colour to a political job! We are only meant as red herring'.<sup>11</sup> In the year 1914 Kitchener was deeply involved in the diplomatic game, entertaining Abdullah, the second son of Husain bin Ali, Shareef of Mecca, including facilitating his travel to Constantinople in

British Ambassador's yacht.<sup>12</sup> In one of the meetings in Cairo Kitchener pleased him by saying 'if at any time there is anything that I can do for you, please let me know'.<sup>13</sup>

ESPIONAGE WORKS: First World War (28 July 1914 - 11 Nov 1918) had already started. There was need of Arabic speaking spies as Egypt was under British Imperial Forces and 'Middle East was (being labelled as) stirring up after 400 years. If the weak Turks were pushed out, who should replace them; the Germans, the French, the Russians, or the British? Hogarth and Lawrence were in no doubt'.<sup>14</sup> At the time regular intelligence service at Cairo was so poor that for competent information about Turkish Army and its activities, they had to rely on journalists. Thus with the help of Hogarth, Lawrence was appointed in the map section of Intelligence Department at British headquarters in Cairo. Lawrence as an officer was ideally suited because of his knowledge of Arabic language and travel experience of the land.<sup>15</sup> Lawrence according to his own admission was given work for collecting information about 'distribution of Turkish army and preparation of maps. By natural inclination 'I had added to them the invention of Arab bulletin (journal of spy news) and of necessity Clayton (head of intelligence) came more and more to need me in military wing of Arab Bureau'.<sup>16</sup> In addition to this, he was also a 'tough, hard-working officer, interrogating prisoners and running a network of agents concerned with political and military espionage, and able to push his views, if only indirectly, at a very high level'.<sup>17</sup>

In early 1916, Lawrence was sent to Mesopotamia (current Iraq). Emergency has arisen there as British General Townsend with his ten thousand British soldiers had got trapped at Kut-ul-Ammara by Turkish army and Lawrence was sent from Cairo to bribe the Turkish General Khalil Pasha to provide relief to trapped British Army. This effort proved a complete espionage failure as Khalil Pasha would not accept one million pounds provided by the British for the deal. On his own Lawrence even raised the amount to two million pound but without success, Thus British army had to surrender with much humiliation.<sup>18</sup>

FIRST CONTACTS WITH ARABS: Herbert Kitchener,<sup>19</sup> by this time minister of war in Britain, was also of the opinion that First World War could have an early end if Turkey, labelled 'sick man of Europe' and associated with the Central powers in opposition to Allies, is defeated and

dismembered. Kitchener and Ronald Storrs, the Oriental Secretary met Abdullah to develop friendly relations, which ultimately resulted in a letter from Kitchener on 16 November 1914 assuring help of Britain to Arabs if they revolted against Turks.<sup>20</sup> Abdullah says there were two letters which came one after the other,<sup>21</sup> on which Abdullah said that he will speak to his father Sharif Husain and will respond. These letters later resulted in communication between Henry McMahon<sup>22</sup> the British High Commissioner in Egypt and Husain bin Ali, the so called McMahon-Husain correspondence in which Britain in October 1915, assured Arabs 'to uphold the independence of the Arabs in the area contained within the frontiers proposed by the Sharif Husain bin Ali, with the exception of certain parts of Asia Minor and of Syria'.<sup>23</sup> Husain saw his star rising, wanting to be a Khalifa based in Mecca. The mistake made by Husain was 'to postpone the discussion of secondary matters to a more leisurely occasion'<sup>24</sup> and not to ask for the clarity on these undefined areas of settlement, which later resulted in serious disputes.

**SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT:** As these efforts were going on in this side show of the main war; in the main theatre of war diplomatic struggles were taking place between the players of main Entente powers, Britain, France, Russia and Italy about the future spoils of Turkish Empire. In Early 1915 negotiations opened and secret agreements were concluded. Britain made contracts and fresh obligations, some of which conflicted with, while others confirmed, the pledges she had given in 1915 through Henry McMahon to the Arabs. The first of those commitments: the Sykes-Picot Agreement was concluded with France and Russia in the spring of 1916. Foreign office chose to withhold from French the terms and perhaps even the fact of promises made to Husain. In this shocking agreement parts of Syria were promised to French and Eastern Anatolia to Russia. This was also kept secret from Husain as well. Thus it forms a startling piece of double dealing of the British Imperial power.<sup>25</sup> Wartime diplomacy was complicated by mutual mistrust between colonial powers.

**LAWRENCE ACCOMPANIES STORRS TO MEET HUSAIN:** Thus to promote pleasing the Arab policy, Ronald Storrs went to visit Husain in October 1916. Though Lawrence was not supposed to go there but, wished to, as he was 'fed up with map work'.<sup>26</sup> He on his own initiative asked a leave of absence and joined the group. To get out of the map department and get involved in action, he says that he started pointing out faults in

intelligence reports, by pointing out ignorance and inefficiency he irritated the members of his intelligence team, his trenchant and challenging views could not be disregarded,<sup>27</sup> thus they were ready to give him leave. This is how he pushed himself on Ronald Storrs and visited Jeddah. Storrs liked Lawrence, described him as 'my super-cerebral companion', their friendship was based on common interest of Latin and Greek languages, when Lawrence asked his permission to join him on the trip, Storrs was delighted as he enjoyed Lawrence's company.<sup>28</sup> Lawrence's language, descriptive power and dramatic and imaginative tendencies were real assists to him.<sup>29</sup> In visiting Jeddah with Storrs, Lawrence has deeper aims. It was not 'a strong enthusiasm for the Arab cause'.<sup>30</sup> as claimed by the panegyric author, but 'to bring Arabs firmly under British control and make certain that they remained jealous and divided'.<sup>31</sup> The group met Ali, the elder son of King Husain and Abdullah, the second son at Jeddah. Husain asked Storrs for 60,000 gold sovereigns for the revolt to begin.<sup>32</sup> Storrs brought 20,000 and promises for military equipment. Lawrence manipulated and was able to obtain permission to stay on to meet Faisal, the third son of Husain, who was at Wadi Safra in the countryside of Medina. As compared to Ali and Abdullah, Lawrence liked Faisal and in his report praised Faisal as 'popular idol, and ambitious, full of dreams and capacity to realize them'.<sup>33</sup> It was a forceful report, which gained favour at Military headquarters in Egypt and was forwarded to London, resulting in further support for the Arab revolt.

IN THE FAISAL ARMY: From then on Lawrence joined Amir Faisal rag tag army. Faisal asked him to wear Arab clothes, which he gladly accepted. This fledgling army stuck to the coast of Red sea taking towns like Rabegh, Yanbo and Wejh all supported by Royal Navy who had command of the Red sea. It was arranged that the two would attack Wejh at the same time, navy from the sea and Faisal from land, but Faisal was late and it was mainly the bombardment of Navy which was led by two Indian Army officers, Capt. N.N.E. Bray and Capt. C. E. Vickery which captured Wejh; as the 8000 strong Bedouin column under Faisal and Lawrence failed to arrive on the day scheduled for the attack.<sup>34</sup> Wejh became the main military base, under the Royal Naval supervision from where the future planning was to be organised.<sup>35</sup>

START OF ARAB REVOLT: The main Arab revolt against Turks was started on May 24, 1916, when King Husain from his palace window in

Mecca fired a shot towards the Turk Headquarters. His second son Abdullah took Taif. Royal Navy took care of Jeddah by bombing it from the sea. To gain the important and holy city of Medina the elder son Ali with Abdullah and Zeid, the youngest son, all three gathered around the city and besieged it by drawing a ring round the holy city. Medina garrison and its Turk commander, Fakhri Pasha was a tough nut and would not crack. He kept his hold on Medina until January 1919, even after Turkey surrendered,<sup>36</sup> both Ali and Abdullah were kept at arm's length from the city. The city managed to survive by constant supply of provisions and arms by Hijaz railway. Communications between Syria and Medina was maintained from June 1916 to December 1917, and traffic was more or less regular'. 'I have greatest respect and unbound admiration for Fakhri Pasha ....(who) succeeded in holding Medina until three months after the Armistice'.<sup>37</sup>

**HINDUSTAN PROTESTS:** Soon after the revolt of Husain, Hindustan started protesting, calling Husain to be a puppet of Britain. On the request of Indian Government a telegram from British Government came to McMahon, that we could not risk trouble in India; there is protest in India that foreign forces have occupied holy cities of Islam. Thus British Government decided to withdraw all British and French Military missions from Arab land; though arms, supplies and money would continue.<sup>38</sup> Muslim protesters in India were in favour of Turkey and Muslim solidarity across the world. Muslim India has been under the spell of Jamaluddin Afghani (1838-1897), who has played a major role in this Pan-Islamic unity.<sup>39</sup> In Arab land, Muslims from India had to suffer the brunt. Mahmud-ul-Hasan a Deoband leader and his associates who were in Mecca, were arrested as he refused to sign a Fatwa recognising Sharif's revolt against Turkish Khalifa. Husain turned them to British, who incarcerated them in Malta.<sup>40</sup> When Yenbo and Rabegh were under Arab threat, there was talk of a brigade of British forces to land at Rabegh. The Indian Government continued to be extremely nervous of its effects on Indian Muslim opinion and lobbied against the landing, which was abandoned.<sup>41</sup>

**ADVANCE TO AQABA:** To further the revolt, at Wejh it was decided that attacks should be carried out to destroy the rail tracks of Hijaz railway. In addition to Lawrence there were other Englishmen in Faisal's entourage like Major Garland, who was asked to take care of the track.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, as attacks on Medina completely failed, it was planned to leave Medina alone and go to the north and capture Aqaba. Lawrence left Wejh on 9th May

1917 with thirty camel men and a saddle bag carrying twenty thousand gold sovereigns to distribute and raise Arab tribes to accompany him to Aqaba.<sup>43</sup> As there was a strong Turkish presence in Aqaba with all their guns facing the sea, the route planned was to attack Aqaba from the back, the Nefud desert side. Aqaba fell on 6 July 1917. Lawrence later claimed that Aqaba 'had been taken on my plan by my effort'.<sup>44</sup> While the Arab author Mousa says, 'immediately following the occupation of Aqaba, Lawrence did not claim that he was the leader of expedition nor did he allege that he was the originator of the idea. In fact he stated more than once that Sharif Nasir was the leader of the expedition and that Auda Abu Tayeh, a tribal leader was the actual commander of the fighting force.'<sup>45</sup> Mousa also quotes a number of discrepancies in the statements of Lawrence in Arab bulletin the periodical written as secret reports to Arab bureau and later his statements in his book 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom'.<sup>46</sup>

MEETING WITH ALLENBY: Lawrence only stayed in Aqaba few days after its occupation and then with eight Arabs crossed Sinai desert to reach Cairo. He met Allenby the new commander of British forces in Egypt and asked him for arms and a fund of 200,000 gold sovereigns, to which Allenby said 'well, I will do for you what I can'. Later Lawrence learned that he meant exactly what he said.<sup>47</sup> They received gold sovereigns, military equipment; Rolls Royce armoured cars and Military aircrafts. It seems unfortunate that Allenby's public opinion of Lawrence is at so much variance with his private judgement, he doubted 'that how much Lawrence is a genuine performer and how much charlatan', besides 'we know Lawrence. He thinks himself a hell of a soldier, and loves posturing in the lime light'.<sup>48</sup> Allenby placed no real reliance on Army Commander (Faisal) and Prince of Mecca (Lawrence) when they would not or could not effectively cut Hijaz railway.<sup>49</sup> Lawrence also met Clayton in Cairo and asked him for the command of the forces in Arabia, which was refused on the ground 'that a junior officer could not be given the command'. Instead Faisal was ranked as the Army commander under Allenby and Lawrence was made as political officer. 'Col. Joyce was made the base commandant', stationed at Aqaba.<sup>50</sup>

LAWRENCE'S TREACHERY: On one side, Lawrence was with Faisal promoting his cause and on the other side, he writes on 9th September 1917 to Mark Sykes, a strong political Member of British Parliament and compiler of Sykes-Picot agreement, that 'If you tell me what we have to



give the Jews, and what we have to give to French, I will do everything I can to make it easy for us. Faisal is reasonable and soon to be a successful man as can be, and now is the time to mould him to our wishes'.<sup>51</sup> Though in his book 'Seven Pillars of wisdom' in the introductory chapter he admits 'It was evident from the beginning that if we won the war these promises (to Arabs) would be dead paper',<sup>52</sup> but still he decided to go ahead with the plan. Towards the end of war (July 1918) Lawrence said that the war-time things he had been doing 'in fancy dress' 'were all' 'part of the pose'.<sup>53</sup>

After being well equipped at Aqaba, Faisal formed the right wing of Allenby's army, protecting Allenby from the attacks of Turks from right side and in addition he and his comrades were blowing up Hijaz railway trains. Alec Kirkbride (a trained sapper), who worked with Lawrence as demolition officer in 1918, describes Lawrence's big bangs to blow up trains 'he was not trained as a sapper, he liked to make as big a bang as possible. He wasted a great deal of explosives that had been brought at great trouble on camel backs for hundreds of miles. I was absolutely furious'.<sup>54</sup> Lawrence was at headquarters of Army in Sinai when Allenby asked him to blow the rail bridge at Yarmuk, it was arranged for Nov 5, 1917 or following three days, but Lawrence and party failed in this attempt blaming that an Indian soldier's gun fired early and Turk army was warned beforehand.

TO PALESTINE: As Allenby entered Palestine; this was the third attempt of the British army. The first two were under the Command of General Murray. The first attack was on 25 March 1917, the second attack was on 17 April 1917,<sup>55</sup> and both failed. He was removed from the command after second failure. Allenby, on appointment had reinforcements. In exchange for the soldiers sent to France he received two divisions from Mesopotamia, the equivalent of one from India.<sup>56</sup> A cavalry division was transferred from France.<sup>57</sup> New and better weapons were supplied.<sup>58</sup> Water was brought by pipeline from Nile and food and fodder transported by railway from Kantara on Suez Canal.<sup>59</sup> With all these additions Allenby did not attack directly but deceived the Turks by not attempting on Ghaza but taking de-route through Beersheba and then to Ghaza. Ruined city of Ghaza was only taken by army which had tanks, aircrafts and twice the number of military. 'It has been difficult enough to get as far as Jerusalem. To much surprise on the Allied side, the Ottoman Empire, long perceived to be weak and inefficient, had proved to be very difficult to crack.... It had taken initiative by invading Egyptian territory as far as the Suez

Canal, an invasion which it had taken nearly three years to repel. For an ancient and decrepit state which had been casually dubbed the 'sick man of Europe' for decades, this was a performance to be proud of.<sup>60</sup> Allenby himself has been defeated twice in his thrust to the east towards Amman.

Faisal's force which was supposed to provide safety to main Allenby army was also well equipped with armoured cars, British aircrafts, French mountain guns, money and Military leadership. Col. Joyce and Lawrence were in command; it also had Col. Jafar and Capt Pisani (French). These less flamboyant soldiers were the essential base of the Arab rebellion. They were too far south to cooperate effectively with first of British attacks against Amman in present Jordan.<sup>61</sup>

While he was advancing on Palestine news came of pull out of Turks from Jerusalem.<sup>62</sup> This probably was to avoid a fight in the holy city, highly regarded by the three monotheistic religions faiths. Lawrence was still at headquarters when the official entry to Jerusalem took place on foot by Allenby. This foot entry was planned as 'Catholic imagination of Mark Sykes'<sup>63</sup>, a Christian General is entering a holy city where Muslims have ruled since crusades. Lawrence was elated, took part in entry in British Army uniform, wrote to his mother of being 'fortunate, getting to Jerusalem just in time for the official entry',<sup>64</sup> throwing dirt in the eyes of Faisal and Husain.

**SYKES-PICOT EXPOSED BY BOLSHVICKS:** Sykes visited Wejh on 3rd May 1917 and discussed the future of Syria with Faisal, without telling him about Sykes-Picot agreement. In November 1917 there was Bolshevik revolution in Russia; the communist government was established; it revealed all the secret treaties which Russia has had with its allies, including the Sykes-Picot agreement. Even then, the Arabs were completely ignorant of the revelation. It was Jamal Pasha the Turk Governor of Syria who brought this to notice of Arabs in Beirut. He spoke about the mendacious promises made to Arabs and hoodwinking them (Arabs) with false hopes.<sup>65</sup> He wrote letters to Faisal reminding of treacherous intentions of the allies and offers of peace. Faisal forwarded these communications to his father Husain who asked for an explanation from the British High Commissioner. The British Government officially denied the existence of this treaty and accused Jamal Pasha of ignorance and malice. Jamal Pasha tried again in August 1918 by writing to Faisal,<sup>66</sup>

he offered Faisal: independence to Arabia, autonomy to Syria, and half the riches of Turkey. During spring of 1918, Lawrence discovered these offers by devious means, secretly looking at papers in Faisal secretariat, without his knowledge and was alarmed by its contents and wrote to Hogarth that a copy has been obtained from Faisal's secretariat without his knowledge.<sup>67</sup>

**BALFOUR DECLARATION:** Another news bombshell came in 7th November 1917 when Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour issued a letter to Lord Rothschild recognising the right of Jews to establish a national home in Palestine, the infamous Balfour Declaration,<sup>68</sup> thus depriving Arabs of future Palestine. Lawrence and Imperial forces also promoted a meeting between Jewish leader Chaim Weizmann and Faisal and arranged him to visit Faisal's camp at Aqaba. Weizmann describes the arduous journey he took by boat first, followed by cars; three of them, one breaking down after the other, then by camel and finally on foot. After some rest he met Faisal, he calls this to be a fulfilling meeting. A lengthy and detailed conversation took place,<sup>69</sup> which continued later in London; and resulted in signing a contract between Faisal and Weizmann, all due to persuasion of Lawrence. David Lloyd George, British Prime Minister's support for Zionism was based on a huge overestimate of Jewish influence.<sup>70</sup> Weizmann interestingly, witnessed money spinning, the gold distribution by the British, he writes 'English gold sovereign-already a rarity to most of us-being distributed... then I remembered the several heavy cases which have travelled with us, under strong guard on our boat.'<sup>71</sup>

**SYRIAN LEADERS DEMAND CLARITY:** Additional warning sign of betrayal was raised by seven Syrian leaders in Cairo, who raised the questions by asking for clarity of British policy, which was sent to London and passed to Sykes, who masterfully complicated the answer by ambiguity, dividing Arab areas into various categories and by careful wordings included some as sovereign areas, others which Britain would wish and desire to be based on 'the principle of the consent of the governed.'<sup>72</sup> It was so worded that alternative interpretations can be put forward from the statement. The subtle ambiguity was deliberate.

**LAWRENCE LAUGHS OFF THE CRITICAL QUESTIONS:** One serious objection was humorously avoided by Lawrence, when he met Nuri Shalaan, a Ruella tribal leader, who was supposed to lead an attack on the town of Deraa. Nuri was politically aware of Sykes-Picot

agreement, and knew that Lawrence has not told the whole truth. Nuri brought out copies of the Sykes-Picot agreement and the declaration to the seven Syrians of Cairo; asked in puzzlement which of them all, might he believe? 'As before, I glibly repeated 'the last in date and Emir's sense of honour of his word made him see the humour.'<sup>73</sup>

LAWRENCE IN DAMASCUS: The plan for the last push to Damascus was decided at Allenby headquarters, Deraa was the next town where there was human carnage and looting by Bedouin tribes. They were still seventy miles from Damascus. Lawrence was in hurry to lead and reach the city before the cavalry. The entry to Damascus was on 1st October 1918. There was considerable controversy about who entered Damascus first, Faisal or Allenby forces?<sup>74</sup> Lawrence installed an Arab Government gunning down the supporters of Aljazaeri brothers, who were established by Jamal Pasha before leaving Damascus. The streets were littered with the dead and wounded. This was what Lawrence described as the 'whiff of grapeshot' Lawrence was fully capable of ruthlessness,<sup>75</sup> he himself has described a massacre in Tafas, 'we killed and killed', and 'the retreating army was largely slaughtered'.<sup>76</sup>

LAWRENCE HUMILIATED IN DAMASCUS: The curtain drop to the drama of war came on 3rd October, 1918, when Allenby, Faisal, Lawrence and Australian General Chavul came face to face. Allenby has already received instructions about Syria 'it would be most desirable that in conformity with the Anglo-French Agreement of 1916 he should if possible work through an Arab Administration by means of French Liaison'.<sup>77</sup> Faisal completely ignorant of the English language, was unable to communicate with Allenby, had to depend on Lawrence for translation. Allenby told Faisal about Sykes-Picot agreement. Both Faisal and Lawrence completely denied any knowledge about the agreement. Though Sykes-Picot may have been known to, both Lawrence and Faisal in April 1917.<sup>78</sup> In fact Lawrence knew of the Sykes-Picot even before the Arab revolt began,<sup>79</sup> that is why he kept stressing the need to entre Damascus before cavalry. Lawrence has completely avoided this conversation in his book 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom'. It is the Australian General who provided the details.<sup>80</sup> Faisal was obviously disappointed, Lawrence out of disgust and shame asked Allenby to take leave from his military service. This was granted. Lawrence later wrote 'I hopped off like a scalded cat and swore that I'd never go back',<sup>81</sup> left Syria and was in London on 24th October 1918.

LAWRENCE PLAYS POLITICS: The moment Lawrence left Damascus until the end of 1921 he was involved in political manoeuvring. He attended Eastern Committee of War Cabinet during later part of 1918. He proposed to the Committee his own political solution to Middle East by dividing it into the sons of Husain, Faisal in Syria, Abdullah in Southern Mesopotamia and Zaid in northern Mesopotamia.<sup>82</sup> This was against what was promised to Husain by McMahon, an independent Arab state under Husain. Even the India office was bitterly against his proposal, as they have their own candidate for Mesopotamia. By December 1918 there had already been a gentleman's agreement between Lloyd George, British Prime Minister and Clemenceau, the French premier to divide the spoils of war. Most of the members of Eastern Committee had no idea that the matter had been decided over their heads by Lloyd George.<sup>83</sup>

PARIS & SAN REMO CONFERENCES: This was followed by Paris Peace conference starting 18 January 1919. Germany was the main subject of discussion. The Middle East was a side show. Faisal was invited by Britain, He 'was followed by Lawrence like a shadow, never allowing him out of his sight',<sup>84</sup> they travelled round France and Britain. Also met King George V, but Faisal was told officially that 'if the French Government insisted on its rights under the Agreement (Sykes-Picot), Great Britain would not be in a position to refuse'.<sup>85</sup> Faisal was grudgingly accepted by France, the host of the conference. He was allowed two Arab delegates to sit in the conference,<sup>86</sup> to counter act his presence French added its traditional friends from eastern Mediterranean, like Howard Bliss, President of the Syrian Protestants College in Bairut, Shukri Ghanem, head of French Syrian Central Committee and Daoud Ammun, a Maronite delegate, was also there and spoke in the conference.<sup>87</sup> Faisal felt his lack of knowledge of English language and his unfamiliarity with European diplomacy. He had limitations imposed on him by his father and he felt isolated and under pressure because of scant courtesy with which he had been treated by the French.<sup>88</sup> He had to depend solely on English support and especially, Lawrence. The dichotomy of Lawrence's role at the conference is evident from what he set out and echoed to retain Faisal's confidence in order to make the Arab national movement easier to control. He was at the conference primarily to assist in looking after British interests.<sup>89</sup> During this tour Lawrence was showing uncommon zeal in persuading Faisal that there is no harm in concluding the proposed agreement with Zionists, which Faisal did, though added certain pre-

conditions.<sup>90</sup> At Paris peace conference Faisal spoke on 6th February, first laying stress on the Arab independence and in discussions following stressed the principle presented by American President Woodrow Wilson of self-determination of the governed. He asked for a commission of enquiry to be sent to Syria and Palestine to determine the wishes of the population. This was later known as King Crane commission.<sup>91</sup> But none of the powers (Britain, France and Italy) took any interest in it.

Paris peace conference left many gaps about the fate of Middle East. This was settled finally in San Remo conference in Italy (April, 1920). As agreed by gentlemen's agreement of Lloyd George and Clemenceau, Britain obtained Palestine and Mesopotamia, while France got whole of Syria.<sup>92</sup> These decisions were called mandates and were nothing but unabashed self-interests. These were worse decisions than Sykes-Picot. By the middle of 1920, French occupied whole Syria and Faisal, the king of Syria, was found sitting on his luggage at Haifa railway station.<sup>93</sup>

**DEVASTATION OF ARABS AT CAIRO CONFERENCE:** In early 1921 Lloyd George took Middle East out of dual control of Foreign Office and India Office and added it under the Colonial Office, making Winston Churchill as the in-charge of the department. Churchill persuaded Lawrence to join him as adviser on Arab affairs. Lawrence flung himself whole-heartedly into the assignment; being advocate of indirect rule over Middle East. He and Churchill got on well together and started to formulate a solution to the problems which Peace conference has left untouched. A third conference was announced in Cairo to be held in March 1921. Lawrence admitted 'The decisions of the Cairo conference were prepared by us in London, over dinner tables at the Ship restaurant in Whitehall'.<sup>94,95</sup> Faisal was forced on Iraq as the king with the help of another spy in Baghdad, Gertrude Bell<sup>96</sup> and was elected in Iraq with a majority of <sup>96</sup>.8 percent votes,<sup>97</sup> in a country which he has never visited before. Churchill and Lawrence then interviewed Abdullah at Jerusalem and with money and threats manipulated him to accept Transjordan.<sup>98</sup> A country created for him and did not exist before. Churchill frequently used to boast that he created the Emirate of Transjordan by the stroke of his pen one bright Sunday afternoon.

**LAWRENCE THE MAN:** There is no doubt that Lawrence was a man out of ordinary. Mrs Bernard Shaw while writing to Lawrence elevates him 'The finest people come from the most unexpected and, apparently the most

unlikely and unfortunate combinations'.<sup>99</sup> Fully grown up he was a short statured little man, his height has been described by the authors between 5 feet, two inches to five feet, six inches.<sup>100</sup> In all the photographs where he is standing with others his littleness can be clearly seen. All short statured people have an inferiority complex and to get out of that complex they take extra ordinary risks to prove better than other people and that is what he tried to prove all his life. Even in adult hood he has a boyish face.<sup>101</sup> He had suffered from Mumps when he was adolescent.<sup>102</sup> Mumps in adolescent males causes a complication called Orchitis,<sup>103</sup> inflammations of testes, which gave him impotence and his lack of interest in women and sex. 'Neither flesh nor carnality of any kind. He was sexless, at least that he was unaware of sex'.<sup>104</sup> He did develop close relation with many men, like Vivian Richards,<sup>105</sup> Dahoum, a donkey boy in Carchemish, and John Bruce.<sup>106</sup> He even did not develop secondary male sex features like beard. He was clean shaven and did not need to shave except once in 3 to 4 months.<sup>107</sup> He claimed to have been sexually abused in Deraa by Turkish governor of Deraa, Khajim Bey. Lawrence's various statements on different occasions themselves vary on this incident, some time accepting and at other times denying that the incidence took place. Phillip Knightly and Colin Simpson the authors of 'The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia' have investigated this aspect by critical study and visiting Turkey, interviewing relatives of Khajim Bey and following his diaries and have not found any evidence of truth in the claim.<sup>108</sup> Lawrence has shown curious duplicity all his life showing off to escape but behind the scenes persuading his hagiographers like Lowell Thomas to write what he wanted,<sup>109</sup> reviewing their writings before publications and posing for his photographs and portraits.<sup>110</sup> Lawrence's military training was a 'stint in the Oxford University Officer training Corps. He was detested by regular army of his time.... He was himself a guerrilla who was not averse to terrorism when it suited his purpose'.<sup>111</sup> In 1920 Lawrence estimated that the British had killed 'about ten thousand Arabs in the revolt'.<sup>112</sup>

**LAWRENCE RECORDS HIS EXPERIENCES:** Having failed to achieve his claim to gain the independence for Arabs he tried to achieve his craving for literary creativeness by writing a book 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom'. He has called himself 'half poet',<sup>113</sup> he devoted himself to writing it. He has intention of writing his memoirs from the beginning since he joined Arabs, as he has a little red book in which he has been seen writing in his Arab days. Though he lost the first draft of his book and had to re-write the

second draft from memory and from notes which he had been sending to Arab Bureau. But he was never satisfied with the draft and had forwarded the drafts to his friends and colleagues for their comments. Even the first edition called Oxford 1922 edition was printed in limited numbers and sent for comments. There are many discrepancies in the Oxford 1922 edition and 1926 Subscriber edition. After meeting Nuri Shallan in Subscriber edition he calls himself 'chief confidence man', but in the earlier Oxford text it is 'chief crook of our gang'.<sup>114</sup> He describes the raid near Haret al-Amareh in three pages in Arab Bulletin, but the same raid he eulogizes to thirty two pages in Seven Pillars.<sup>115</sup> He calls his book not history but 'bone of history'.<sup>116</sup> It is a historical fiction described by his powerful descriptive language. He describes the country sites and his travels in the superfluous details. There are hardly any dates and numbers in it and does not come to the standard of an academic book of history. The book is a propaganda book, full of rhetorical writing and fine sentiments.....self-confessedly suppressing some facts and altering others.<sup>117</sup> The Seven pillars are thus made of sand and disintegrate to critical appraisal. The first edition of it was published in 1926. A shorter version, for financial gains, was issued as 'Revolt in the Desert' in March 1927.<sup>118</sup>

Lawrence has been attributed to be the father of modern guerrilla warfare.<sup>119</sup> Historically Ghazu is well established tribal Arab tradition of raiding to gain animals and other tribal essentials.<sup>120</sup> Ghazu has only become reduced in recent years since the oil prosperity in Arabia. During the Arab revolt it was Aziz Ali al-Misri who initiated the idea of fast moving column to terrify the Turks that Lawrence later claimed to be his idea.<sup>121</sup>

LAWRENCE & ARABIC LANGUAGE: Lawrence learned Arabic language from his servants....his followers were servants and mercenaries.<sup>122</sup> During his Carchemish days he wrote home saying 'The only pity is my Arabic..... I manage an hour every day at it in the early morning with Dahoume and a dictionary'.<sup>123</sup> He pretended that he was more an Arab than English and that he knew Arabic as well as any Arab. But the fact is that he did not know Arabic all that well, but spoke it with an obvious accent.<sup>124</sup> He found 'my grammar is atrocious'.<sup>125</sup> He was exposed to Bedouins and spoke their language, he avoided educated Arabs. 'British advisors, some of whom, including Lawrence, were very antipathetic to this (educated Syrians) class. Lawrence much preferred the company of Bedouins and tribesmen'.<sup>126</sup> During Paris peace conference a large number



of Arabic protesting telegrams came which Lawrence was unable to read, had to be given to Lt. Col. J. I. Edie, a member of Iraqi delegation for translation.<sup>127</sup> McHugo observes that acting as a translator of diplomatic Arabic would have been a very different matter from using the language to communicate with an overwhelmingly illiterate tribal army.<sup>128</sup>

LAWRENCE TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM HIS PAST: He was severely depressed, especially after his failure in gaining Syria for Faisal. It was a humiliating defeat from which he never recovered.<sup>129</sup> He felt sense of guilt because of his betrayal of Arabs.<sup>130</sup> According to his mother he would sometimes sit between breakfast and lunch. 'in the same position without moving'.<sup>131</sup> His depression was made worse by the acts of American journalist Lowell Thomas ( in the book ' With Lawrence in Arabia' ), who in 1916 made a lecture tour, and slide show about him, and carried it through all over the world and made him a 'matinée idol' according to Lawrence himself,<sup>132</sup> though he has failed in achieving anything until then. His disturbed emotional state- near madness has been blamed now on 'Post traumatic depression'.<sup>133</sup> His depression caused him to punish himself for his miss deeds. He drew up a theatrical act, involving John Bruce to beat him with Birch which according to John Bruce started in 1922 and continued to the end of his life in 1935.<sup>134</sup> It has been described as masochistic tendency.<sup>135</sup> His depression has deep roots. He was aware of his illegitimacy when he was young. His depression led him to suicidal tendencies.<sup>136</sup> He wrote a letter to a colleague H.G. Hayter at Miranshah, about ten years after Paris; ' O lord: and I am so tired, and want so much to lie down and sleep or die. Die's best: because there is no reveille'.<sup>137</sup> Ronald Storrs writing after Lawrence's death says that, Lawrence's last letter ends ' with three words from Greek Anthology of a man who wished he had not been born'.<sup>138</sup> He had attempted suicide as described by John Bruce.<sup>139</sup> In fact, there remains hardly any doubt that speeding his Motor Cycle, which he use to pursue was his attempt to kill himself. His escape to Royal Air Force, Royal Tank Corps and back to Royal Air Force from latter half of 1922 to his retirement in March 1935, are all efforts to escape, but still providing publicity, the best description for which is a celebrity maxim: if its publicity you're after, get married in secret.

LAWRENCES UNSTABLE PERSONALITY: His unstable personality is also evident in escaping from himself by adopting various names to hide his identity. His family name was Chapman but his father adopted the

name of Lawrence when he eloped with the maid. He was called Ned at home. When he joined Arabs for a period he called himself Sharif Hasan.<sup>140</sup> Arabs could not pronounce his name and called him Urens. When he was back from Arabia and joined Royal Air force he became John Hume Ross. He adopted the name of T. E. Shaw when he was in Tank corps. He was labelled 'short Arse' in air Force.<sup>141</sup> In Tanks Corps he was 'Boroughie Shaw' because of his Motor Cycle.<sup>142</sup> George Bernard Shaw in a letter addresses him as Luruns.<sup>143</sup> He did a review on D.H. Lawrence's novels in Spectator magazine; there he did not use his name but wrote under a pseudonym of Colin Dale.<sup>144</sup> He also used a false name to his swimming instructor, though what name was used is not mentioned.<sup>145</sup> He rented a room in Richmond trying to escape Journalists and used the name of T. E. Smith.<sup>146</sup>

LAWRENCE & THE ARABS: The Arabs Lawrence was dealing were mostly illiterate, superstitious, believing in 'evil eye'. They have never really been a nation or family, Imperialists divided and ruled; driving their wedges into old splits.<sup>147</sup> The Arabs were fascinated by Lawrence's golden hairs and intense blue eyes,<sup>148</sup> some even thought that he has supernatural powers. The role of Gold Sovereigns are vital in raising the Bedouins. Writing about this; Rolls a car driver of Lawrence calls gold the 'powerful persuader', to save mutiny in the army of Bedouins. In some instances he had to return '500 miles or more to get gold sovereigns'... 'there was another rebellion on foot, gold was running short'...' four hundred miles out and four hundred return in two and a half days saw us back with gold which again saved the situation'.<sup>149</sup> 'Lawrence usually had a bag or two of sovereigns in his tent, and whenever a sheik came in and asked for money Lawrence would tell him to help himself. He allowed them to keep all that they could take out of the bag in one handful..... (One) sheik broke all records by picking up one hundred and forty-three sovereigns in one hand'.<sup>150</sup>

In Lawrence's view Cairo's decision 'if not perfect, it was good enough'. Arabs obtained all that in my opinion they had been promised by Great Britain'.<sup>151</sup> Lawrence has claimed that Churchill 'finding solutions fulfilling (I think) our promises', to which Antonius, the author of *The Arab Awakening* observed (Churchill) fulfilled neither the letter nor the spirit of the promises'.<sup>152</sup> Lawrence wrote an article in *Arab Bulletin* for 'beginners in Arab armies' giving twenty seven brainy points for 'handling Arabs' and called it an art' not a science'.<sup>153</sup>

Husain has a blind faith in English promises. He believed that 'A British promise is like gold. No matter how hard you rub it, it still shines.'<sup>154</sup> It seems he has not read history, even a cursory eye on the history of the English and their rule in India would have shown him the right path. Husain has committed 'an unforgivable sin against Musalman world.... Divided two (Musalman) brother nations, Arab and Turks' .<sup>155</sup> After Cairo conferences Lawrence was sent to King Husain to persuade him to accept the settlement which has arrived at Cairo, but Husain would not agree to his appeals and threats. Lawrence described him as 'a tragic figure in his way: brave, obstinate, hopelessly out of date: exasperating'.<sup>156</sup>

Faisal has obligations to the English, he said to Abdul Kader Al-Jazairi, 'We are obliged to go along with these people, because we are fighting with the help of their money and their arms'.<sup>157</sup> Faisal also thought that Lawrence has exceptional position in the revolt because of his genius,<sup>158</sup> On 11th November 1918 Faisal gave a political speech to his people in Syria, declaring 'I am an Arab.....Arabs were Arabs before Moses, and Jesus and Muhammad... anyone who sows discord between Muslims, Christians and Jew is not an Arab. I am an Arab before all else'.<sup>159</sup> While in England before Paris Peace conference Faisal has two meetings with Weizmann, in which he totally depended on Lawrence who not only pressurised Faisal to accept and sign a contract with Weizmann and have deliberately miss represented, Faisal's views and seeking his signature without fully informing him of the contents.<sup>160</sup> Lawrence also drafted a letter after Faisal-Frankfurter (Member of French academic delegation) meeting in April 1919, whose contents were not entirely made clear to Faisal. He then may or may not have been induced to sign it, or it is likely that Lawrence simply signed it in English on his behalf.<sup>161</sup>

Much after the war in 1933, Lawrence in conversation spoke his observations about Faisal' Faisal was a timid man who hated running into danger, yet would do anything for Arab freedom-his one passion, purely unselfish.... It made him face things and risks he hated. At original attack on Medina he had nerved himself to put on a bold front, and the effort had shaken him so that he never courted danger in battle again'. Another officer; Wilson had written: 'Sharif Faisal has greater breath of character (than Ali) and no more strength. He is easily frightened and lives in constant dread of a Turkish advance though he seems to conceal that fear from his army.'<sup>162</sup>

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### **Abstract**

This article aims at highlighting the life of Thomas Edward Lawrence. It covers many aspects such as his espionage, his first contact with Arabs, Faisal army, Arab revolt, Palestine and other allied themes as Hindustan protest and Balfour declaration. At the time the First World War, there was need of Arabic speaking spies as Egypt was under British Imperial Forces and 'Middle East was (being labelled as) stirring up after 400 years. If the weak Turks were pushed out, who should replace them; the Germans, the French, the Russians, or the British? Hogarth and Lawrence were in no doubt'. At the time regular intelligence service at Cairo was so poor that for competent information about Turkish Army and its activities, they had to rely on journalists. Thus with the help of Hogarth, Lawrence was appointed in the map section of Intelligence Department at British headquarters in Cairo. Lawrence as an officer was ideally suited because of his knowledge of Arabic language and travel experience of the land. Lawrence according to his own admission was given work for collecting information about 'distribution of Turkish army and preparation of maps. By natural inclination 'I had added to them the invention of Arab bulletin (journal of spy news) and of necessity Clayton (head of intelligence) came more and more to need me in military wing of Arab Bureau'. In addition to this, he was also a 'tough, hard-working officer, interrogating prisoners and running a network of agents concerned with political and military espionage, and able to push his views, if only indirectly, at a very high level'.

**Keyword:** Espionage, Faisal Army, Palestine, First World War, Balfour declaration, protest in the undivided India