
Primitivization of Major Warfare in the Future

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Introduction

- Petraeus: “with a few exceptions, Ukraine is not the future of warfare”
 - Consistent Western view that future warfare will be more technologically advanced than present
 - Especially, but not only, true of technologist visions of war—even more conservative analysts only downplay technology
 - But no analyst has suggested that operational technology may deteriorate as a result of future major warfare—primitivization
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What is primitivization? 1

- The attritional stress of (major) warfare erodes military organizations
 - Technologically
 - Socially
 - Organizationally
 - Relevant primarily to medium and large armies
 - Small armies will simply, ultimately, be annihilated by attrition
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What is primitivization? 2

■ Social

- Pertains to group cohesion
 - Decimation or even destruction of the primary group through combat and other attrition
- As result, military organization as a miniaturized society edges toward collapse

■ Organizational

- Excessive social primitivization causes organizational primitivization
 - Loss of leadership/specialists inhibits organizational performance and they become less complex and effective
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What is primitivization? 3

- Technological
 - Perhaps a peculiar feature *modern* warfare, once technology became hard to replace
 - More complex tech = fewer units
 - Attrition destroys or incapacitates high tech and eventually it can only be replaced either by lower tech or no tech
 - Origins of primitivization not only in warfare and attrition but also industrial policies, manpower policies, etc
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Examples of primitivization 1

- Two modern examples of primitivization
 - Wehrmacht, eastern front
 - Divisions suffered more casualties than they had men
 - Primary group collapsed, replacements ill-trained
 - Leadership cadres suffered
 - Wehrmacht segregated into modern and unmodern elements
 - A few panzer divisions (with increasingly few actual panzers) among many foot-powered infantry divisions
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Examples of primitivization 2

- Russian army, Ukraine
 - Numerous units wrecked, including spetsnaz units and 155th Naval Infantry
 - As far as we can tell, Russian forces suffering variably substantial social and organizational primitivization
 - Under Surovikin, Russia tried to conserve its technological resources
 - Force employment focused on tech preservation
 - Thank goodness for Gerasimov
 - But even then, increasingly old equipment is coming out of storage
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Examples of primitivization 3

- Ukraine?
 - Relying on Western aid
 - Giving a boost to tech level
 - Trying to avoid primitivization through cautious force employment
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Primitivization and the West 1

- The West has not experienced primitivization in decades, at least
 - Vietnam for social/organizational, Dunkirk for tech
 - This has enabled tech-high visions of future warfare
 - Western expectations of warfare product of incomplete precision revolution
 - Where West is unilateral holder of PGMs, no experience of bilateral precision warfare
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Primitivization and the West 2

- The West has fought dreadfully unprepared opponents at times of its own choosing
 - Iraq, Serbia, Libya
 - Which is unlikely to describe much of future warfare defending alliance partners
 - Where the enemy will be ready, the West unready, and the West must *get in the way and defend*
 - Which means: human and material attrition will happen
 - And will the West be able to cope? Or will its militaries also primitivize under attritional pressure?
 - The West is likely even to run out of PGMs and then even its ammunition arsenals will be primitivized!



Conclusion

- Primitivization is not doomsday
 - But preventing it will require changes to manpower policies, defense industrial policies (these are slowly happening already), force design changes, and tactical/operational style changes—particularly on the offensive
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