**Multifrontier war: possible forms of future warfare**

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【Abstract】With the development of globalization and informatization, especially the internationalization of production chains, all countries have lost control over the entire process of the production chain, and therefore have lost the monopoly on war resources. This makes the all-out confrontational Cold War in the fields of science and technology, economy, politics and military increasingly impossible. Under such circumstances, human wars, especially wars between major powers, have developed from the Cold War plus proxy war model to multi-frontier wars. Multi-frontier wars have the characteristics of multiple fields, multiple subjects, multiple forms and multiple results. Wars between major powers are no longer limited to gains and losses at a certain time, place and field, but have become complex interactions and multiple and diverse war-type games with different results. This requires countries to have different responses in different fields under the premise of overall strategic design, which poses a challenge to the political system and strategic system of many countries.

【Key words】war game, multi-frontier war, globalization, informationization

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Engels pointed out that "once technical advances can be used for military purposes and have been used for military purposes, they immediately and almost forcibly, and often against the will of the commander, cause changes or even revolutions in the way of warfare". War was born with human society and has evolved with the evolution of human society, showing different characteristics at different stages. The battlefield, combatants and war forms have all changed. From the perspective of weapon selection, war has experienced a transition from the era of cold weapons to the era of hot weapons; from the perspective of combatants, war has experienced a transition from war between professional combatants to total war, with the two world wars as the peak; from the perspective of war forms, war has experienced an evolution from hot war to cold war. In this process, war has undergone a process of development and self-negation. Human beings' pursuit of the means of war has, on the contrary, denied the value of their own existence due to the emergence of nuclear weapons.

**The evolution of war forms and their characteristics**

War is an organized conflict committed by states and other subjects of international law to force one party to obey the will of another party. In traditional warfare, force and the threat of force are the main means of warfare. Carl von Clausewitz believed that "war is the continuation of politics" and that force is used as a means to force one party to obey the will of another. [1] However, after World War II, the frequency and scale of the use of force between countries, especially between major powers, gradually decreased, and the threat of force and the use of other non-violent means gradually increased in the choice of war means. As a result, the traditional, narrow concept of war that uses force as the main means is no longer applicable to the needs of contemporary and future war thinking.

The history of the evolution of human warfare. In the agricultural society and before, human warfare (if it can be called war) basically belonged to the era of cold weapons. Cold weapons did not exist when human society was born, but were also the product of human society's development to a certain stage. When weapons were differentiated from the means of production and living, when weapons became a professional war tool and no longer a part of the means of production and living, the era of cold weapons began. The era of cold weapons went through the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, spanning the primitive society, the slave society and the feudal society, and is the main part of the history of human warfare.

In the transition from agricultural society to industrial society, human warfare also entered the era of hot weapons. Mature hot weapons were produced in the Southern Song Dynasty of China, but they were first popularized in Europe. Europe entered the era of hot weapons in the 16th century. In the 18th century, hot weapon technology developed rapidly, many automated hot weapons appeared one after another, and human society also entered the era of hot weapons. The two world wars were the peak of the era of hot weapons, and nuclear weapons were the pinnacle of the era of hot weapons. Compared with the history of human civilization for thousands of years, human society has not entered the era of hot weapons for a long time, but it has developed very quickly. The era of hot weapons has gone through three stages: hot weapons dominance, transportation dominance, and information command dominance.

From the 18th century to the 19th century, with the advancement of technology, weapons such as rifles, automatic rifles, automatic machine guns, smoothbore cannons, howitzers and mortars have become the key to the success or failure of wars. At this stage, the means of transportation for hot weapons are still traditional human, animal and wind power, and the gap between countries is not large.

With the development of various modern transportation tools during the peak period of industrialization, wars have also entered the mechanized stage. The means of transporting weapons have gradually become more important than the weapons themselves. The key to a tank is no longer the gun, but the armored vehicle and its power system. The key to the difference in air force power among countries is the number and performance of aircraft, and the importance of airborne weapons themselves has declined. From World War II, the Korean War to the Vietnam War, the victory or defeat was mainly determined by the weapon carrier and transportation system, not the weapons themselves.

In the process of transformation from industrialization to informatization, war has entered the informatization stage. In the Gulf War, the Iraq War and the Afghanistan War, the weapon system not only grew "legs" like in the mechanization stage, but also grew "eyes". Reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance, the collection, processing and use of information have become the main factors that determine the outcome of a war. In the Gulf War in which the United States attacked Iraq, the United States had all-weather and all-domain information freedom in front of Iraq, suppressing Iraq to the traditional era of relying on manpower to transmit information. Information monopoly has become the biggest reliance of the US military in the Gulf War and subsequent wars.

At present, the form of human warfare is developing in the direction of information warfare. Weapon systems will not only have "eyes" like in the information age, but will also have their own "brains". Under this prospect, directly destroying the brain of the opponent's military system may start or end the war. The form of human warfare may transition from the information age to the information warfare age. Of course, real information warfare has not yet appeared, and only some small-scale information police operations have occurred at this stage.

Characteristics of war at different stages. The advancement of weapons and equipment has expanded the geographical scope of war, allowing traditional limited wars to develop into total wars, which reached their peak during World War II. Nuclear weapons are the pinnacle of hot weapons, but they have alienated themselves into an unusable weapon, limiting the choice of war means and turning hot wars into cold wars. War tools have developed in different directions in different fields, causing wars to present different trends and characteristics at different stages.

The mechanization of the army and the rapid development of the navy and air force have greatly changed the form of the battlefield. From the cold weapon era to the early hot weapon era, the battlefield is where the two armies meet, and the outcome of the war often depends on the outcome of the battle between the two armies on the battlefield. In this case, the asymmetric phenomenon of weak countries and strong soldiers often occurs. The difference between combatants and civilians is also very clear. This form of war is also consistent with the political form of the country at that time. In the monarchical era, especially in Europe, wars between countries were actually wars between monarchs. The number of standing armies in a country was very small, the participation of the people was very low, and the scale and duration of wars were often very limited. After the outbreak of the French Revolution, the people's right to participate in politics was improved on the one hand, and their right to participate in wars on the other hand was also improved. All countries generally increased the number of standing armies, and the scale and duration of wars between countries also increased significantly. War gradually changed from a tool for competing for interests between monarchs to a rational and effective tool of national policy. Until the first half of the 19th century, Clausewitz still regarded war as part of national policy and a continuation of domestic affairs in his book "On War". In other words, in the eyes of war theorists at that time, war was still limited.

Since the First World War, the rapid development of weapons and transportation has not only greatly changed the battlefield, but also made it possible to mobilize the public to participate in the war. During the First World War, a total of 1.5 billion people from 33 countries were involved in the war. The territory involved in the military operations reached 4 million square kilometers, and the length of the battle line was 2,500 to 4,000 kilometers. In the Second World War, the scale and depth of the war were further expanded. From the outbreak of the war in September 1939 to the end of the war in September 1945, World War II involved more than 2 billion people from 61 countries and regions, and the combat area reached 22 million square kilometers. This gradually blurred the boundaries between the front and the rear of the war, and the limited war between professional soldiers became a total war involving the whole people.

During World War II, the major countries in the world also achieved total mobilization of the whole people in terms of political ideology. The ideologies of countries around the world are divided into three major factions: liberal capitalism, socialism and fascism. Fascism is based on the socialist national political mobilization structure and the ideological foundation of racism. It is racism in name only. The liberal capitalist camp and the socialist camp both believed that "the lesser of two evils" should be chosen, forming a world anti-fascist wartime alliance and defeating the fascist camp in the form of total war. It can be said that the major participating countries in World War II achieved the highest level of mobilization technology, mobilization system and ideological confrontation, which was also the highest level of war in the industrial age. After this peak, the human war form will develop in the direction of self-negation. The opportunity for this self-negation is the emergence of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons reflect the traditional human tendency to pursue maximum lethality. This tendency itself has also made hot war an irrational form of warfare. Nuclear weapons are the ultimate pursuit of firepower and lethality in war by human society, and played a significant role in ending World War II. Although the two nuclear weapons dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan caused huge casualties, they also saved countless lives, including the lives of Americans and Japanese, avoided a decisive battle between the United States and Japan on the Japanese mainland, and ended World War II ahead of schedule. [2] The huge lethality of nuclear weapons has ultimately changed the relationship between nuclear weapons and humans. On the one hand, nuclear weapons have become the highest symbol of international political power and national strength, attracting the unremitting pursuit of many countries and turning many countries from nuclear weapon owners into slaves of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, the huge destructive power of nuclear weapons has also made human society fear nuclear weapons. The indiscriminate attack method of nuclear weapons has made human society disgusted with them, and has turned Japan from a perpetrator of World War II into the only victim of nuclear weapons, gaining many moral advantages after World War II. All these combined have turned nuclear weapons from a usable weapon into a deterrent weapon. For the first time, human society invented a weapon beyond its control, which changed the human understanding of war. Nuclear weapon owners did not want to fight each other, which became a new consensus. Nuclear weapons, which are extremely hot weapons, made wars colder and colder, becoming the terminator of wars between major powers and promoting the arrival of the Cold War era.

From cold weapon war to hot weapon war, from hot war to cold war, the history of human warfare has experienced an evolutionary process of self-alienation and negation of negation. It can be said that if there were no nuclear weapons, human society would also invent other new weapons of self-negation to end the evolution of war from total war to self-destruction. However, the Cold War still has many similarities with World War I and World War II. The Cold War is still a war of attrition with an overall front. The United States and the Soviet Union each led their own allies to completely isolate and confront each other in terms of economy, science and technology, and military. Of course, there were hot wars during the Cold War. The Cold War refers to the realization of cold peace between nuclear powers, which puts the main body of human society in a state of cold peace. At the same time, small-scale hot wars (compared with the two world wars) between nuclear powers and non-nuclear countries, and between non-nuclear countries and related actors, especially hot wars with the characteristics of proxy wars, still exist. Therefore, the Cold War is a form of war in which the overall Cold War and local hot wars coexist.

**The evolution of war after the Cold War**

After the end of the Cold War, the biggest changes in human society are informatization and globalization. Informatization and globalization are two interconnected and complementary concepts. Without informatization, the process of globalization would not have been able to advance so quickly; without globalization, the results of informatization would have been difficult to popularize as they are today. This made the Cold War lose its information and economic foundations. The boundaries between major powers are no longer traditional national boundaries, and the strategic significance of the alliance system has also undergone tremendous changes.

The process of informatization has made modern warfare less mysterious, and has also made traditional war theories, skills and decision-making arts less useful. The misunderstanding, fear and uncertainty in judging the balance of power caused by information asymmetry are important factors in the occurrence of many wars and the Cold War. But now, obtaining information is no longer a problem. What is difficult is the ability and timeliness of information processing. From the perspective of war means, human warfare has also experienced a transition from the energy-dominated era to the information-dominated era. [3] In the energy-dominated era, information was only an accessory to energy. In the information-dominated era, information itself has become the core factor in determining the success or failure of a war. During the Gulf War, there were hundreds of thousands of Americans fighting on the front line, which still reflected the traditional combat situation where the front was more important than the rear. However, after the Gulf War, from the Afghanistan War, the Iraq War, the Syrian Civil War to the Libyan Conflict, the US combat form has shown that the rear information analysis and command personnel are more important than or even more than the front combat personnel. After the emergence of drones, there is even a phenomenon of zero combat personnel on the front line. Because of this, the combat form has changed from platform confrontation, that is, the traditional confrontation of aircraft against aircraft, tank against tank, and warship against warship, to system confrontation. [4] In the combat system, the most important thing is the information collection, processing, analysis and command system that connects the combat platform with the rear. At the same time, the development speed of information technology itself is much faster than the development speed of combat weapon effectiveness. In this case, the information-dominated war model is transitioning to a new model of information warfare. In the information warfare model, the acquisition and deprivation of information capabilities may be the starting point and end point of the war.

In the information age, the tools of war have also changed. In war sites and fields extending from land, sea, sky, electromagnetic to outer space, the importance of information is increasing. Now, cyberspace is constantly expanding and its importance is also increasing, gradually evolving from an appendage of the real world to a new parallel space. This has not only made war transcend traditional geographical restrictions to a large extent, but also made traditional low-level war elements such as culture and language become more important international political factors.

Globalization, especially the internationalization of production chains, has caused countries to generally lose their independent war resources. As early as 1909, British journalist Angle said in a pamphlet "The Illusion of European Nothingness" that the commercial and financial ties between countries in the world, especially European countries, were so close that no rational country dared to start a war. Although Angle's theory failed, it does not mean that globalization has no influence on the choice and form of war. After World War II, especially after the end of the Cold War, globalization quickly developed in the direction of international division of labor in the production chain. What is going on between countries is no longer a simple exchange of goods and production factors, but an exchange, synthesis and integration between different production chains. This has caused all countries, including major countries, to lose complete control of the production chain, and therefore have the right to influence other countries' war-making capabilities. In other words, the deeper level of globalization, the international division of labor in the production chain, has taken over, or at least partially taken over, the right to allocate war resources from sovereign states. Therefore, when the conflict between China and the United States arises, the first thing the United States thinks of is to bring manufacturing back to China, that is, to reduce its dependence on China's manufacturing industry. The essence of this is to regain more strategic freedom and control over war resources from globalization.

The impact of globalization on the form of war is no less than or even greater than the emergence of nuclear weapons. The deterrent function of nuclear weapons exceeds the combat function, making the Cold War inevitable. However, the Cold War became a reality mainly due to the mutual isolation and independence of the United States and the Soviet Union in terms of ideology, economy, science and technology, and military systems. In fact, then-US President Roosevelt had imagined the US-Soviet relations and international order after the Cold War. President Roosevelt believed that by making the United States socialist and the Soviet Union capitalist, both taking a middle-of-the-road approach, the two countries would move toward each other in ideology, thus having the opportunity to avoid conflict, achieve reconciliation, and coexist. But in the end, the ideological differences between the United States and the Soviet Union were too great, and simple adjustments could not bridge the differences. The mutual independence of the two countries in economic, scientific, and military systems made the cost of the Cold War very low for both sides. If the United States and the Soviet Union adjusted to each other to adapt to each other, they would probably pay a higher domestic cost than the Cold War. Therefore, the mutually isolated and independent economic and technological systems of the United States and the Soviet Union were both the premise for the Cold War and the basis for its development. From another perspective, the Cold War is also a form of globalization, that is, local globalization. Both the United States and the Soviet Union worked hard to build their own economic systems, and the economies of the United States, Japan, and European allies achieved unprecedented integration and integration. The Cold War was symbolized by the nuclear arms race and proxy wars, but its foundation was the long-term competition between the two local globalization systems in terms of production capacity and innovation capabilities. When one party's economic model cannot maintain the internal circulation within its own system, it will inevitably seek a way out from the other party. In practice, the Cold War was about to end when the Soviet Union's highly centralized, high-input, low-output economic model could not be maintained due to the constraints of the supply of production factors. Globalization thus crossed the ideological boundaries and moved from the stage of local globalization to the stage of globalization in the true sense.

Therefore, it was the process of globalization that ended the Cold War. The United States originally believed that it was the winner of the Cold War. From the perspective of sovereign states, it seemed so in the short term. From 1991 to 2008, the United States was in a dominant position. However, the continued development of the globalization process weakened and dispersed the hegemonic advantage of the United States. On the one hand, globalization led to the equalization of production efficiency, the rise of emerging countries, and the development of the international structure in the direction of multipolarization. On the other hand, while the United States used the process of globalization to rule the world, it was also restrained by the world in the opposite direction, and finally formed a new phenomenon in which the United States both led the world and was melted by the world. The United States originally wanted to Americanize the world, but at the same time, the United States also became globalized. This is reflected in the international division of labor in the production chain and the domestic population structure of the United States. The United States is increasingly changing from a beacon of the world to a microcosm of the world.

In the context of informatization and globalization, protracted large-scale physical wars, especially between major powers, have lost their possibility and feasibility. The international division of labor in the production chain has resulted in no country being able to fully control its own war material supply, or even to engage in a cold war. In this case, armed forces will give way to economic, social and other fields, becoming the main venue for wars between major powers. As Singaporean scholar Kishore Mahbubani believes, in Asia, the economy, rather than the military, is the main area of ​​strategic game. [5] In this case, what is the form of war between countries, especially war between major powers?

**Humanity is heading towards a new era of multi-frontier warfare**

The form of human warfare is determined by factors such as the cause of war, weapon technology, economic conditions, international structure and degree of mobilization. Before World War I, apart from the religious wars in European history, there was rarely a situation of all-out ideological confrontation. Wars either occurred between monarchs or were a rational choice of national policy. From World War I to World War II, there was ideological confrontation, which was strengthened by war technology and mobilization capabilities. Human warfare has therefore become a total war. After the end of World War II, ideological struggles continued and mobilization capabilities became stronger, but the emergence and development of nuclear weapons made hot wars flourish and decline. Since the end of World War II, wars between major powers have become increasingly unfeasible due to reasons such as weapon technology and economic structure. There has been no direct hot war between major powers in the world, and wars have developed in the direction of miniaturization, fragmentation and civil war. From 1946 to 2016, the number of wars and armed conflicts in the world has increased, from 17 in 1946 to 52 in 2016. However, the number of deaths caused by wars and conflicts has been declining, from about 300,000 per year between 1946 and 1952 to about 90,000 per year in recent years. This downward trend is even more obvious if we take into account the rapid growth of the world population. Between 1946 and 1952, the death rate was about 15 per 10,000 people per year. In recent years, the highest war death rate was in 2014, with only 1.44 deaths per 10,000 people. [6] These data clearly show that the total war between the world's major powers is being replaced by a new war model with diverse motivations, different scales and multiple actors. Moreover, after the end of the Cold War, the comprehensive confrontation between socialism and capitalism has also disappeared, and the ideological basis of the Cold War no longer exists either domestically or internationally.

Causes of multi-frontier wars. As can be seen from Table 1, the main reasons affecting the form of war, from the root causes of war, weapons technology, economic conditions, international structure to the degree of mobilization, are changing in different directions. These changes jointly influence and shape the new form of war.



First, the existence of nuclear deterrence and the process of globalization are the main factors that prevent hot wars from happening between major powers. Nuclear deterrence was once the main factor in avoiding hot wars between the United States and the Soviet Union and an important factor in moving towards the Cold War. It still plays an important role in shaping contemporary relations between major powers. Russia abandoned its commitment not to use nuclear weapons first in 1993. After entering the 21st century, with the overall international environment improving, major powers still emphasize the importance of nuclear weapons from time to time. The United States maintains the right of the U.S. military to use nuclear weapons first in response to conventional attacks. In the "Integrated Assessment of Security, Defense, Development and Foreign Policy" report released on March 16, 2021, the United Kingdom stated that within five years it would abandon the previously self-imposed upper limit of 225 nuclear warheads and reduce it to a lower limit of 180, replacing it with a new upper limit of 260.

The economic interdependence generated by globalization, especially the international division of labor in the production chain, is an important link in maintaining relations between major powers. On the one hand, globalization increases the economic interdependence between countries. Today, the economic interdependence between China and the United States, Japan, and Europe is far greater than the degree of interdependence between major powers during the two world wars, and is far different from the almost complete economic isolation between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. On the other hand, and more importantly, globalization has also created some complex connections that go beyond intergovernmental relations, [7] which supplement, influence, and constrain the decisions and choices of governments.

Second, the decentralization of the causes of war and the multipolarization of the international landscape are two major factors that lead to the miniaturization and decentralization of war forms. The decentralization and diversification of values ​​is a common phenomenon in countries around the world today. Unlike the direct confrontation between fascism and anti-fascism during World War II and socialism and capitalism during the Cold War, there is now a general internal division in countries around the world, making it difficult to form a united front of values ​​on the international stage. In the United States, the left, center, and right factions coexist, and socialism, liberal capitalism, populism, and racism are differentiated and combined, and the relationship between them is complex and diverse. Unless there is a sufficiently strong external stimulus and threat, it is impossible to form a unified value system in American society. One country, three worlds, is not only reflected in the level of economic development, but also in the value structure of many countries.

The multipolarization of the international structure is an important trend in the current world. An important reason for the outbreak of the Cold War is that the United States and the Soviet Union both have absolute power advantages and leadership in their respective alliance systems, and have a high degree of decision-making freedom. At the end of World War II, the US GDP accounted for about 56% of the world's total GDP, the manufacturing output value accounted for more than 60% of the world's manufacturing output value, and had nearly 70% of the world's total gold reserves. These power advantages made the US foreign policy basically equivalent to the international relations norms at the time. When the United States determined that the Soviet Union was the main threat and was determined to strategically contain and encircle the Soviet Union, the Cold War broke out. Now it is different. The United States is still the world's largest country, but its leading advantage in most areas is not as good as before. Take GDP as an example. Although the United States has a quarter of the world's share, its total GDP, including its core allies, is less than half of the world's total. This has caused the international status of the US-Western group to gradually decline, and it is gradually declining from a shaper and leader of the international system to a participant in the international system, although it is still the most influential participant.

Third, the emergence of new war domains and the diversification of mobilization levels. New technologies have developed more war domains. In particular, the virtual space constructed by the Internet has gradually become a parallel space, and there is a trend of becoming the superstructure of the real world. On the one hand, this has promoted the networking of government activities and social life; on the other hand, it has also made the value of virtual wars continue to rise. As of January 2021, the world's population is 7.83 billion, while the number of mobile phone users worldwide is 5.22 billion, the number of Internet users is 4.66 billion, and the number of social media users is 4.2 billion. The average time an average Internet user spends on the Internet is about 7 hours, which is equivalent to sleep time; the time spent on social media users is about 2.5 hours a day, which occupies most of the time outside of work and rest. [8] In this case, the social and psychological results that used to be obtained through war can now be directly affected, influenced and shaped through virtual space. This has led to a decline in the importance of war in the real space, and the war in the virtual space has continued to rise with its low cost, all-weather, precision and importance. The diversification of war domains has also led to a diversification of the degree of national mobilization. In different fields, countries need to mobilize forces to different degrees, and it is difficult to formulate a uniform foreign strategy.

The main characteristics of a multi-front war: A multi-front war is also a multi-front war, in which there will be no unified battlefield, no consistent front, no identical outcome, and a complex phenomenon of multiple fields, multiple subjects, multiple forms, and multiple outcomes occurring simultaneously.

Multi-frontier wars will unfold simultaneously in multiple fields, without a definite, single battlefield and a consistent continuous front. From high-level political fields to low-level political fields, from military, political, diplomatic, economic, financial, cultural to social psychology; from real space to virtual space, everywhere may be a battlefield. In this case, multi-frontier wars will be a war of attrition without an overall front, and the influence and significance of national borders and geographical factors on the war will decline. In fact, this phenomenon has already appeared and has become the main means of international political struggle, but we rarely regard it as a war at present. In 2018, after the United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear agreement and resumed sanctions against Iran, Iran's GDP growth rate dropped from 12.3% in 2016 and 3.7% in 2017 to -4.8% in 2018 and -9.5% in 2019. Iran's unemployment rate also rose to 16.8% in 2019. The economic sanctions imposed by the United States and Europe on Russia since 2014 have not only caused Russia an economic loss of 0.2 percentage points each year, but also damaged the enthusiasm of foreign companies to invest in Russia, and damaged Russia's economic development in the long run. [9] These have caused serious social and political conflicts in Iran and Russia, which is essentially a silent war.

The actors of multi-frontier wars will be diversified. On the one hand, the participants of wars will be diversified. Traditional wars take place between two countries or two parties, while multi-frontier wars can have more than two participants. For example, in the technological war around chips, although the participants are mainly China and the United States, Japan and Europe are also key actors, and the final victory or defeat does not necessarily have to be between China and the United States. On the other hand, the actors of wars within countries will also be diversified. In physical wars, soldiers do not have to be soldiers. The engineering and technical personnel behind them and the companies that provide reconnaissance and communication services may be more important. As early as during the first Gulf War, the US military discovered this phenomenon. The military operations of the US military are mainly planned by engineers and technicians, and generals and officers are more responsible for implementation rather than traditional planning and command functions. In diplomatic wars, the actors do not have to be diplomats. Non-governmental organizations, media practitioners, experts and scholars may be more important actors. After the end of the Cold War, the diplomatic institutions of many countries have taken the lead in reforming, and many diplomats have transformed into non-governmental organization personnel to engage in public diplomacy activities. This new folk diplomacy backed by traditional diplomatic institutions is more efficient, less sensitive, and more concealed. China’s Myitsone hydropower project in Kachin State in northern Myanmar could have been the 15th largest hydropower station in the world and would have benefited both China and Myanmar. However, it was largely protested by some social groups supported by the United States. [10] This not only caused the initial investment of more than US$1 billion by Chinese companies to go down the drain, [11] but also cast a heavy shadow on the long-term development of China-Myanmar relations, with an impact no less than that of a small war.

The manifestation of multi-frontier wars will be differentiated. The form of multi-frontier wars is developing from being dominated by physical wars to being dominated by virtual wars. On the one hand, in multi-frontier wars, the importance of logistics, command and control systems gradually exceeds the importance of frontline combatants. The emergence of new combat means such as drones has reduced the importance of frontline combatants to the extreme. On the other hand, the relationship between the two sides of the war is also more complicated. The clear enemy-friendly boundary in traditional wars has gradually become blurred in the new form. In multi-frontier wars, not only will the Cold War, small-scale hot wars and proxy wars exist at the same time, but even the contradictory relationship forms such as enemy-friendly, cooperation and competition will also appear at the same time.

The results of multi-frontier wars will be diverse. In each field of war, the participants will face different results. Victory, defeat, stalemate, coexistence and other different results will appear at the same time or cross each other. Although it is not unimaginable that a country will win in all fields at the same time and overwhelm the other party, it will be a low-probability event. Even in the war in the same field, the victory and defeat of the participants will be different in different fields and stages. Take the Sino-US trade friction as an example. The United States obviously has more chips in the Sino-US trade relationship, even an overwhelming advantage, but the result of the trade friction is not as the US government wishes. Although the Sino-US trade friction has caused great pressure on China and led to a slowdown in China's economic growth, the United States has not seen a win-win phenomenon of raising tariffs and revitalizing the manufacturing industry at the same time. The Sino-US trade friction has become a long-term competition between the two countries in terms of endurance and resilience at the political and economic levels.

**Conclusion**

Traditional wars aim to destroy the opponent or make the opponent completely submit to one's will. The former is like the Cold War, when the US and Western camp dismembered the Soviet Union and the Soviet-Eastern alliance system. The latter is like the two world wars, when the defeated Germany, Japan and other countries were forced to accept the will and arrangements of the victorious countries. Multi-frontier wars are different. For major powers, each war field is only part of the problem, and victory or defeat is not enough to affect the survival of the country and the overall outcome. Therefore, multi-frontier wars are destined to be diffuse and protracted wars. The goal of war is not to destroy the opponent, but to move the power margins between the opposing parties in different fields, so as to expand one's own power space and compress the opponent's power space. In the end, these increasing new powers gather together to form a force that overwhelms the opponent, forcing the opponent to collapse or surrender.

The diversification of war fields will also lead to the phenomenon of multi-centering of war. In each war field, there will be battlefield centers that are both interconnected and independent of each other. Relevant countries will enjoy different war status in different war centers and will need different strategies and tactics. This poses a severe challenge to the traditional war theories and competition strategies of sovereign states. The response and coordination capabilities of countries in different fields will be more important than comprehensive national strength. Therefore, whether a multi-field flexible response strategy corresponding to the era of multi-frontier wars can be formulated and different coordination and command systems can be established will be the key to determining the success or failure of countries in the era of multi-frontier wars.

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Notes

[1] Clausewitz, On War, translated by Zhang Leifang, Nanjing: Yilin Press, April 2010, pp. 3-4.

[2] DM Giangreco, Hell to Pay: Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan 1945–1947, Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2009.

[3][4]Qi Jianguo, “Grasping the Contemporary Characteristics of the Evolution of War Forms”, Liberation Army Daily, January 16, 2020, p. 7.

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