

The New Wars? The Cognitive Turn and Its Implications.

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The “New Wars” Debate

Since some armed conflicts newly occurred during the 1990s, the word “new wars” becomes fashionable (Gray, 1997; Kaldor, 2006(1998); Snow, 1996). After September 11 incident, that word becomes much popular (Duffied, 2001; Jung 2003; Münkler 2005). Although many scholars use it in various ways, there are several common characteristics. According to Mary Kaldor, the new wars can be contrasted with earlier wars in terms of their goals, the methods of warfare and how they are financed (Kaldor, 2006:7). The first characteristic of the new wars is its goals. While old wars were about the geo-political or ideological goals, new wars are about the identity. Other scholars point out that new wars are waged because of greed rather than grievance and that the war itself becomes the purpose (Berdal and Malone, 2000)(F0a). The second characteristic of the new wars is the changed mode of warfare. As a breakdown of public authority blurs the distinction between public and private combatants, and between combatants and civilians, civilian casualties are increasing and civilians are sometimes deliberately targeted as an object of wars(F0b). The third one is the relation between new wars and global economy. The state failures and the civil wars are usually driven by global war economy.

It seems plausible that the new wars are emerging. However if we look at wars in detail, we can find out some facts that refute the new wars hypothesis. First, according to the data of the UCDP-Prio¹ Conflict Dataset, we can observe the decline in the number of armed conflicts after the end of the Cold War (F1)(Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg and Strand, 2002). Partly due to the end of the Cold War, many armed conflicts terminated through negotiated settlements or victories. According to the data of the Human Security Data Set, 42 conflicts ended in negotiated settlements and 23 ended in victories in the 1990s while only 8 ended in negotiated settlements and 20 ended in victories in the 1980s (F2, F3). Seeing this trend, some scholars express the very optimistic view that most current warfare is opportunistic predation waged by small packs of criminals and bullies and that war has been substantially reduced to its remnants (Mueller, 2004: 116). Although we should not over-estimate the current trend, it is the fact that the number of armed conflicts is now

¹ Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO).

decreasing.

Second, several scholars also rebut the vague impression that the number of civil wars has increased since the end of the Cold War. In fact, the number of civil wars began to decrease since the mid-1960s and the ratio of civil wars among wars has continued to be over 50 % since the end of the World War II. If we put proxy wars between the United States and the Soviet Union into the category of the internationalized civil wars, we can say that the age of the civil wars has already begun during the Cold War era at least. In other words, the number of the internalized civil wars has declined since the end of the Cold War (F4) (Harbom and Wallensteen, 2005). In addition, the risk of death in battle declined significantly after the World War II and again after the end of the Cold War (Lacina and Gleditsch, 2005; Lacina, Gleditsch, and Russett, 2006)(F5). If we exclude five large conflicts (Vietnam War, Korean War, Chinese Civil War, Iran-Iraq War, and Afghan Civil War)(F6), the global battle deaths seem to fluctuate between high and low war intensity years and we can find out a persistence of smaller scale and diverse conflicts(F7). However the data by no means support the gloomy picture painted by some scholars who emphasize the bloody aspect of “new wars”, at least when measured according the number of battle deaths.

Furthermore just over half the battle deaths continued to occur in civil wars for the whole period after the World War II. So the high percentage of battle deaths in civil wars is not so new (F8). In addition, some scholars refute the hypothesis that the ratio of civilian to military deaths in the new wars is increasing. We can find out the continuing high civilian-to-military casualty rates in the small wars or the savage wars waged outside of Europe since the colonial period (Henderson and Singer, 2002: 175). For example, in the Philippines-American War (1899-1902), 4,000 U.S. troops, 20,000 insurgents, and roughly 200,000 civilians were killed (Ileto, 1999: Karnow, 1989:194)(F9). This kind of high ratio of civilian to military deaths (almost 10 to 1) in “the savage war of peace²” is not unusual outside of Europe. In this sense, if we put them in the lineage of small wars, we can understand the essential character of the so-called new wars much clearer. (We will discuss this point in the next section.)

Is the “new wars” hypothesis is totally wrong? As many review articles on the “new wars” suggest, we can find out most of characteristics of the “new wars” in the

² Rudyard Kipling’s famous poem “The White Man’s Burden” was written in 1899 and its subtitle is “The United States and the Philippine Islands”. In this poem, Kipling wrote as follows. “---Take up the White Man’s burden---*The savage wars of peace*---Fill full the mouth of Famine And bid the sickness cease;---The ports ye shall not enter, the roads ye shall not tread, Go make them with your living, And mark them with your dead!----”

old wars (Kalyvas, 2001; Henderson and Singer, 2002; Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Newman, 2004; Melander, Öberg and Hall, 2006). However it is difficult to deny even the newness of the relation between recent armed conflicts and rapid globalization including global war economy. Apart from such newness, we should note the impact of globalization on the cognitive framework. As the recent rapid globalization promotes the time-space compression very much through satellite TV and internet etc., the old “small wars”, which we had not paid much attention to, become visible as new wars. We might call this kind of change the cognitive turn in terms of the political (time-) space.

According to the old framework with regard to the political (time-) space, the space can be differentiated between the inside and the outside by the territorial boundary. Apart from the barbarian outside, each territorial unit is recognized sovereignty by each other. In this classical European worldview, the old wars meant indiscriminate wars. As the famous Clausewitz dictum (the war is a continuation of politics by other means) indicates, war was regarded as a rational instrument of policy based upon geo-strategic, economic, or ideological concerns. In addition, the distinction between the wartime and the peacetime was relatively clear. During the wartime, the distinction between civilians and soldiers was also clear. Although this kind of the 19th century framework had been shaken by gradual changes in world politics, the end of the Cold War has accelerated the cognitive turn.

As a background of the cognitive turn, we notice the situation that the absolute asymmetrical relation between the North and the South emerged due to the end of the Cold War and that, instead of the former Communist block, the South (including militant Islam) now takes the position of the threat for the West (the threat to international peace and security). The absolute asymmetrical relation leads to the change in the state sovereignty in the South, that is the denial of the principle of non-intervention. In various ways, the west begins to justify its intervention in the domestic affairs of the developing countries. One of them is an argument about the responsibility to protect. From humanitarian military interventions to preventive wars, there are similar arguments that justify “good wars” against the evil in the “new wars” (Lawler, 2002; Dexter, 2007).

While this kind of asymmetrical relation makes old “small wars” look new, it also could give birth to new irregular wars. In order to make this point, we must examine the lineage of the irregular wars.

The Lineage of the Irregular Wars: Asymmetrical Conflicts and Absolute

Antagonism

According to Carl Schmitt's *Theory of the Partisan*, the problem of the partisan firstly emerged in the guerrilla war that the Spanish people waged against the army of a foreign conqueror from 1808 until 1813 (Schmitt, 2007:3). We can know the atmosphere at that time through Francisco Goya's famous picture "The Third of May, 1808" and his etching "The Disasters of War" (F10-12). Here we can see the characteristics of the new wars such as the blurring distinction between the civilians and the military, the high percentage of civilian casualties and so on. As Schmitt pointed out, "the partisan of the Spanish guerrilla war of 1808 was the first who dared to fight irregularly against the first modern, regular army." One of his important indications is that the idea of 'irregular' wars firstly emerged in contrast with 'regular' wars. Another important point is that regular wars sometimes need and accompanied irregular wars while marginalizing them.

As the institutionalization of regular wars proceeded, it became necessary to eliminate irregular wars. In order to do it, the superior side suppressed the inferior who waged irregular wars. However the inferior had no choice but to adopt the guerrilla warfare in the asymmetrical conflicts. Responding to this act, the dominant side also adopted the irregular tactics such as counter-insurgencies operations. In this way, the institutionalization of regular wars failed to eliminate irregular wars. In the asymmetrical conflicts, irregular wars intermittently appeared by taking various kinds of forms including savage wars and proxy wars. They tended to appear more easily at the periphery of the world system.

Although the Spain guerrilla war was the first irregular wars against the regular wars in Europe, there had been earlier cases outside Europe. One of them is the French and Indian War in America (1755-1763). It is well known that George Washington, who had learned tactics of partisan warfare in this war, applied it in the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). In addition, we should take a note of the fact that Johan Ewald, who was one of Hessian soldiers during the both the French and Indian War and the American Revolutionary War, wrote the first book on the small wars (*Abhandlung Über den keinenkrieg*) in 1785.

It is ironical that the United States, which had got the independence by using tactics of the small wars, began to wage various kinds of small wars against weak nations one century later. A series of ambiguous labels such as revolutionary war, low-intensity war, and complex emergencies were invented to describe them. Outside of Europe, asymmetrical conflicts between major powers and minor actors have continued to give birth to many ambiguous small wars from the colonial era to the

post-Cold War era. Small wars have appeared intermittently like specters for the West. In particular, the United States was gradually captivated by 'the cult of guerrilla' through small wars in Latin America and Southeast Asia. As one strategic study scholar lamented, too much preoccupation with the guerrilla warfare and the Special Forces leads to the failure to apprehend the complexities that caused internal instabilities in places like South Vietnam (Smith, 2003). According to this view, the terms like guerrilla warfare, low intensity conflicts and new wars are fundamentally flawed as analytical abstraction. War is war, regardless of what tactics are used. At the same time, all wars are unique to their time and place. So if we want to know the true character of the new wars, we should put them in the long historical context.

Irregular wars do not always emerge under asymmetrical conflicts. Even under symmetrical conflict, they might happen. If you look back on the history, there was the time when irregular wars were widespread inside Europe. That is Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). By looking at the painting and etchings by Jacques Callot and Sebastian Vrancx, we can guess how civilians were killed indiscriminately by the military and how civilians involved in the killing (F13-16). A structural parallel with the new wars is apparent in the war economy organized according to the principle of *bellum se ipse alet* (war feeds war) (Münkler, 2005:44-45). War itself becomes part of an economic life that is no longer under political control or subject to political limitation. In other words, the institutionalization of modern warfare marginalized this kind of irregular warfare that had been common at the time of Thirty Years' War.

In this respect, we should revise Charles Tilly's famous thesis that war makes states (Tilly, 1990). Regular wars make states while states marginalize irregular wars. In other words, modern states succeeded to construct the myth of the social contract by giving protection to the population while they monopolized war machines and waged wars against each other by using the tax that they extract as protection rackets from the people. One of reasons why the war machines could become motors for promoting the state-formation in Europe without destroying the political order is the principle of separation of church and state. Due to that principle, European society succeeded to transform the antagonistic relation from absolute one (*absolute Feindschaft*) to conventional one (*konventionelle Feindschaft*) or realistic one (*wirklich Feindschaft*). However if the war machines were operated by the logic of the absolute antagonism, it would lead to the disasters of uncivil and irregular wars like Thirty Years' War. (In this sense, the new wars might indicate some symptom of de-institutionalization of the modern warfare.)

Schmitt classified antagonistic relations into three categories such as

conventional one, real one, and absolute one (Schmitt, 1997:85-89). Firstly, a conventional state war of European international law began. Then real enmity arose out of the major wars. Real enmity seemed to end with a global civil war of revolutionary class enmity or absolute enmity during the Cold War era (Schmitt, 2007:95). It is the emergence of the absolute enmity that late Schmitt was the most afraid of. It is well known that he emphasized that the political world is full of the friend/enemy relations and opposed against the prohibition of the use of inter-State force from such a realistic standpoint. In particular, he notoriously took the pro-Nazi position and criticized Anglo-American 'universalism' justifying annihilation of enemies as evils. Following the beginning of the Cold War, he also began to warn against the emergence of absolute enmity triggered by communist guerrillas. After Schmitt pointed out four criteria of the partisan---irregularity, increased mobility, intensity of political engagement, and telluric character, he pointed out that the communist guerrilla began to lose the fourth *telluric* character by taking the form of "globally aggressive revolutionary activists (*des weltagressiven, revolutionen Aktivisten*)" rather than "defensive autochthonous defenders of the homeland (*des defensiv-autochthonen Verteidigers der Heimat*)".

Thus the absolute antagonistic relation between "globally aggressive revolutionary activists" and "globally aggressive hegemonic dominators" began to encroach the periphery of the international public order during the Cold War era. Fortunately, due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and other historical contingencies, we could avoid the catastrophe such as total absolute antagonism through nuclear wars. However we now face the newly emerging absolute enmity. This absolute enmity has expanded through various kinds of civil wars in the Middle East and Central Asia. After the September 11 incident, unilateral military interventions taken by Bush government expanded the absolute enmity that is 'the war against terror' in combination with 'jihad'. That is also the process in which the defensive guerrilla warfare by the "autochthonous defenders of the homeland" began to have links with each other through transnational networks and transformed itself into the "globally aggressive revolutionary activists"(F17). Reacting to this situation, even the liberal intellectuals and technocrats began to adopt the binary worldview such that the global civil society is now surrounded by the global civil war including the new wars. In sum, in spite of the decreasing numbers of armed conflicts, the new wars looks like a symptom of the global civil war. For living Kipling, the 'savage wars of peace (good wars)' are needed to fight against the evil in the 'new wars', which could be the threat to the global civil society (or the threat to international peace and security).

Neo-liberal Global Governance and the “New Wars”

The new wars represent the relation between them and us or between the friend and the enemy in some ways. In order to understand it, we need examine the substructure of that representation. Behind the newly emerging absolute antagonism, we should pay an attention to the restructuring of the global power alongside neo-liberalism. Related with this point, Kaldor’s claim that the new wars are closely related with global war economy seems suggestive. In the zone of the new wars, war has become an economically attractive chance for warlords and militia leaders. Irregular wars by destroying the public order make the hotbed of illegal economies while illegal economies support irregular wars. In short, illegitimate violence gives birth to lucrative wealth while the wealth support violent patrons. It is certain that this kind of vicious cycle began to accelerate due to the cut of the economic aid and the deteriorating economic conditions after the end of the Cold war and the deepening neo-liberal globalization³. During the post-Cold War era, the marginalization of the periphery expands the informal economies, which sustains the new wars and sometimes leads to the phenomena such as failed states or collapsed states. Contrary to famous Tilly’s thesis that war made the state and promoted the primitive capital accumulation, we are now observing the situation such that the “new wars” destroy the state and hinder the primitive capital accumulation in some parts of Africa and Central Asia (Sørensen, 2001; Niemann, 2007).

Who is responsible for this kind of vicious cycle? This question is closely related with the issue of the representation of the new wars. Under the present neo-liberal global governance, mainstreamers tend to attribute its responsibility to the local governance such as bad leaderships or corruptions. Although this argument is not wrong, we should be careful about how they emphasize this aspect. By ignoring problems at the global level, they focus upon problems at individual local governance as causes of the security gap between the North and the South. Even the word such as ‘empowerment’ is substantially used for forcing the governed to do self-improvement and self-help. In this way, neo-liberal global governance delegates (or imposes) the

³ The decisive shift for war economy occurred in the 1970s and the 1980s in the case of Peru and Columbia (Münkler,2005:96). An essential condition for this was the creation of an open war economy, through association of the regional war economy with organized international crime. The growing and marketing of cocaine made such an alliance a real possibility. In the case of opium, CIA’s covert operation gave a birth to a hotbed for illegal trade around Southeast Asia and Afghanistan (McCoy, 2003).

responsibilities to local governance or each individual.

If you look back upon the 1970s, you can understand the character of this neo-liberal global governance in the context of the North-South relation. First, neo-liberal governance emerged reacting to the hegemonic crisis during the 1970s. At that time, the global hegemony faced the rebellion of the South such as NIEO and OPEC. The dependency approach scholars claimed that the poverty problem in the developing countries originated from the North. As the South substantially dominated UNESCO, the US and the UK seceded from it temporally. Reacting to the hegemonic crisis, the North push forward neo-liberal restructuring at the global level as well as the domestic level. Then the voice of the South gradually faded into neo-liberal backlash. After the successful neo-liberal counter-revolution (the neo-liberal passive revolution), Absolute asymmetric relations reemerged and the responsibilities for gaps are attributed to the weaker side. The way in which new wars are understood is an important aspect of this kind of political rationality of neo-liberal global governance (Duffield, 2001: 108).

However the forces, which promoted the new wars and the global civil war, are now integrated into the global capitalism. Furthermore as declining global hegemony begins to display its characteristics, the dominance without the hegemony (Guha, 1997), it also plays an important role to promote the new wars. As far as the new wars form part of neo-liberal global system(F18), it is not sufficient to cut only the affected parts (evil leaders) by surgery. Indeed it is sometimes very dangerous in some cases. On the assumption of the binary worldview that the global civil society confronts the global civil war⁴, if you try to eliminate the latter impatiently, you might give more spaces for the expansion of the global civil war. It is very similar to hawkish liberals' adventures that wage more wars against tyrannies in order to expand the sphere of the democratic peace. Contrary to their intentions, this kind of idealistic globalism tends to expand the sphere of absolute enmity.

Here we can find out the paradox that the successful institutionalization of the cosmopolitan regime that serves the objective of securing the world conjures up the contrary: the legitimating and legalization of war (Beck, 2005). As Napoleon who impetuously tried to change the world brought 'disasters of war' which Goya painted, the hasty peace-building move motivated by political cosmopolitanism makes the distinction between peace and war blurred, which might lead to the peace-destruction. In order to promote peace-building substantially, we need deliberately deconstruct

⁴ With regard to Kaldor's binary view on global civil society, see Buttigieg's critique. (Buttigieg, 2005)

the binary worldview strengthening absolute enmity by self-critical cosmopolitanism and should correct injustice deriving from absolute asymmetries.

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