

# An Extensible MARL Framework for Multi-UAV Collaborative Path Planning

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**Abstract:** Automatic path planning of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) can reduce human operational errors and minimize the risk of flight accidents. Generally, path planning requires UAVs to arrive at the target points safely and timely. The commonly utilized dynamic programming algorithms and heuristic bionic algorithms are characterized by their intricate designs and suboptimal performance, making it challenging to achieve the goal. Some methods based on Reinforcement Learning (RL) are only suitable for specialized scenarios and have poor scalability. This paper proposed an Extensible Multi Agent Reinforcement Learning (MARL) Framework. It includes System Framework and Learning Framework. System Framework sets up the scenario of path planning problem, which can be extended to different scenarios, including dynamic/static targets, sparse/dense obstacle, etc. Learning framework reconstruct the models and scenarios of System Framework as Partially Observable Markov Decision Process (POMDP) problem and adapt MARL algorithms to solve it. Learning framework can be compatible with a variety of MARL algorithms. To test our proposed framework, preliminary experiments were conducted on three MARL algorithms: IQL, VDN, and QMIX, in the constructed scenario. The experimental results have verified the effectiveness of our proposed framework.


## 1 INTRODUCTION


Collaborative path planning for multiple unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) represents a quintessential automatic control challenge. In comparison to traditional manual control, automatic control for multiple UAVs exhibits significant advantages in terms of efficiency and safety.


At present, some algorithms have achieved significant results in path planning for single /distributed UAVs. However, in complex environments characterized by the presence of multiple targets and a significant number of obstacles, a single UAV often struggles to efficiently accomplish the task. Such scenarios typically necessitate the collaboration of multiple UAVs to effectively perform path planning in these challenging conditions. Coordinating multiple UAVs has brought many new challenges (Raap, M. et al. 2019). For example, algorithms tailored for the single UAV-single target path planning problem

solely require consideration for minimizing the distance between the UAV and the target point. But for multiple UAVs, the relationship between the UAV and the target points may change as the environment dynamically changes. In addition, when dealing with multiple target points, competition among UAVs should be taken into account to prevent redundant visits to the same target point. Furthermore, the fuel endurance limit must be considered, ensuring that the UAV reaches the target point within a specified timeframe.

In recent years, various methods and algorithms have emerged in the field of multi-UAV path planning research. Mainly including dynamic programming algorithms, heuristic algorithms, reinforcement learning methods, etc. Ni et al. (Ni, J., Tang, G. et al. 2020) designed an innovative latent game model and optimized binary logarithmic linear learning algorithm, which can address the challenges of collabora-

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tive control and comprehensive coverage of search areas in multi-UAV collaborative search tasks. Zheng J et al. (Zheng, J., Ding, M. et al.2023) developed an overall UAV search objective function in a finite time domain, which not only considers the need for repeated searches, but also considers the maintenance of connectivity and collision avoidance between UAVs. This study decomposes the overall search objective function and establishes a Distributed Constrained Optimization Problem (DCOP) model, which enables all UAVs to optimize the overall search objective by interacting with their neighbors. A method based on Enhanced Genetic Algorithm (EGA) is proposed to explore the global optimal solution of DCOP. Zhang M et al. (Zhang M, Han Y, Chen S. et al., 2023) proposed a RIME algorithm based on multi elite policy enhancement for 3D UAV path planning. This algorithm achieves exploration and development behavior in optimization methods by simulating the formation process of ice. Update the population during the optimal solution selection stage through an improved greedy selection mechanism.

Traditional dynamic programming algorithms are limited to controlling small-scale UAV swarms and require tailored designs for different scenarios, leading to limited flexibility. Heuristic biomimetic algorithms can address these issues to some extent. However, most heuristic algorithms only utilize information from a single step or a few steps to determine UAV behavior and are unable to account for the impact of long-term benefits on current decisions.

Currently, reinforcement learning (RL) algorithms stand as one of the most efficient methods for implementing collaborative path planning for multiple UAVs. Through interaction with the environment, RL learns the optimal policy and adapts to real-time environmental changes. It utilizes historical experience via Q-networks to integrate long-term benefits into UAV behavior decision-making. However, RL still encounters unresolved challenges in UAV path planning for dynamic targets, including: 1. some studies still use centralized DQN(Mnih, V. et al,2015) or IQL(Kostrikov, I. et al,2021) algorithms to solve multi-UAV collaborative path planning problems (Fei, W. et al, 2024) (Fang, W. et al, 2024). These algorithms cannot fully integrate the observed information of all agents, which results in agents are unable to make optimal decisions. 2. Many studies focus on improving algorithms for specific scenarios, and algorithms are inflexibility.

This paper presents an Extensible Multi Agent Reinforcement Learning (MARL) Framework. The Extensible MARL Framework consists of two parts, the System Framework and the Learning framework.

The contributions are as follows:

1. System Framework defines the multi-objective optimization function and the constraints of the problem, and constructs a scenario for multi-UAV path planning, and develops models for UAVs, obstacles, and targets.

2. Learning Framework reconstructs the multi-UAV trajectory planning process into a Partially Observable Markov Decision Process (POMDP), and combines the MARL algorithm with the reconstructed problem. To ensure the smooth operation of the algorithm, the reward function of the MARL algorithm is constructed using environmental information such as the number of discovered targets and the distance between the UAV and the targets.

3. We conducted preliminary experiments using three MARL algorithms, IQL, VDN(Sunehag, P. et al,2017), and QMIX(Rashid, T. et al.,2020), to verify the effectiveness of the proposed method.

## 2 SYSTEM FRAMEWORK

To describe solve the problem of UAVs collaborative path planning. Firstly, we define the problem as a nonlinear multi-objective optimization problem and establish its constraints. Subsequently, based on the problem setting, we depict the scenario and identify the models within it, including drones, obstacles, targets, among others. Lastly, we formulate these models, determining their behavioral and interaction rules.

### 2.1 Problem Formulation

The ability of multi-UAV collaborative path planning can be represented by the number of discovered targets. The objective function is established as follows:

$$F_t = \max \sum_i^m \begin{cases} 1 & |dis(L(tar_{i,t}) - L(u_{j,t})) \leq d_r \\ 0 & |dis(L(tar_{i,t}) - L(u_{j,t})) > d_r \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

For  $tar_{i,j}$  represents the information of i-th target at time t,  $u_{j,t}$  represents the information of j-th UAV at time t.  $L(.)$  is used to obtain location, and  $dis(.)$  is used to calculate distance. The total number of targets is m. When at a certain moment t', the overall environment reaches the condition  $F_{t'}=m$ , the overall goal reaches the ideal optimum.

Meanwhile, the behaviours of UAVs in the scene must meet the following constraints:

$$||L(\forall U_t) - L(z)|| < dz \quad (2)$$

$$L(\forall U_t) \in [(0, M_x), (0, M_y)] \quad (3)$$

$$t \in [0, T] \text{ and } t \in N \quad (4)$$

$$\text{change}(e_{list\ i}) \begin{cases} T | \text{dis}(L(u_{i,t}) - L(u_{j,t})) \leq d_c \\ F | \text{dis}(L(u_{i,t}) - L(u_{j,t})) > d_c \end{cases} \quad (5)$$

For constraint (2),  $z$  representing obstacles, the positions of all UAVs cannot coincide with the positions of obstacles. Constraint (3) means that the position of the UAV cannot exceed the specified area map boundary. Constraint (4) means that the advancement of timestamps must be a discrete integer, without considering the situation where a model is located between multiple grids at a certain time node. Constraint (5) means that the UAV can only exchange  $e_{list}$  information with other UAVs within its communication range.  $e_{list}$  records the information about all targets is heading by which UAV.  $e_{list}$  is an important attribute used to help UAVs avoid accessing duplicate targets. This is defined in Section 2.3.

## 2.2 Scenario Design

Figure 1 shows the overall scenario designed according to the System Framework. Set the size of the specified area to  $(Mx, My)$ , which can be divided into multiple grids of size  $(mx, my)$ . UAVs, targets, and partially changing obstacles are all active within the grid. The field of view (FOV) of a UAV can obtain the information including the location of obstacles and targets, within the grids in its detection range. When the timestamp advancement, UAVs, and some mobilizable targets can move to nearby grids. There are also some immovable targets in the scenario. The condition for mission victory is that  $n$  UAVs reach all  $m$  target points ( $n \geq m$ ).

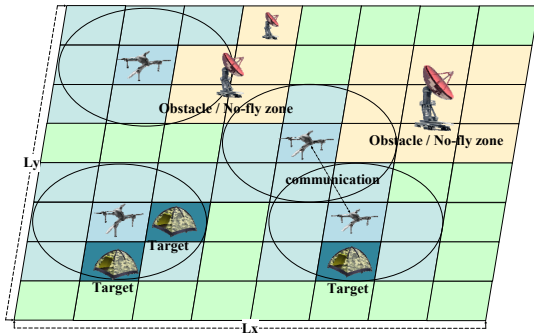


Figure 1: Schematic diagram of multi-UAV collaborative path planning scenario.

## 2.3 Behavioral Modeling

**UAV model:** The UAV model is defined as follows:

$$u = \{x, y, d_r, d_c, e_{list}\} \quad (6)$$

$x$  and  $y$  represent the coordinate positions of the UAV.  $d_{range}$  and  $comm_{range}$  represent the detection range and communication range of the UAV, respectively. With the UAV's own position as the center, it can perceive the presence of targets and obstacles within the  $d_r$ , and can communicate with other UAVs within the  $d_c$ .  $e_{list}$  is a list recording the target points of each UAV. The UAV cannot obtain the complete  $e_{list}$  in real time and can only obtain it through communicating with other UAVs.

The definition of  $e_{list}$  is shown in Equation 6, where  $target_j^i$  represents that UAV <sub>$i$</sub>  is heading towards target <sub>$j$</sub> ,  $n$  represents the number of UAVs, and  $j$  represents the identification number of the targets.

$$e_{list} = \{target_j^i | i = 0, 1, 2, \dots, n, j \in m\} \quad (7)$$

In order to make the overall system scalable,  $n$  can also be set to a slightly larger integer than the total number of UAVs. For example, there are three UAVs in the scene, and at a certain moment  $ct$ , the information recorded in the  $e_{list}$  of UAV <sub>$i$</sub>  may be  $\{0, -1, 1\}$ . The three elements represent that UAV <sub>$0$</sub>  is heading towards target <sub>$0$</sub>  and currently unable to obtain target information tracked by UAV <sub>$1$</sub> , while UAV <sub>$2$</sub>  is heading towards target <sub>$1$</sub> . As shown in algorithm 1. Based on the information stored in  $e_{list}$ , UAVs can dynamically allocate tasks more reasonably, avoiding multiple UAVs from repeatedly reaching the same target.

**Input:**  $e_{list}$  of UAV <sub>$i$</sub>   
**Result:** Updated  $e_{list}$  of UAV <sub>$i$</sub>   
 $U\_list \leftarrow \emptyset$   
 add UAV <sub>$i$</sub>  to  $U\_list$   
**for**  $j=0$  to count (UAVs) **do**:  
     **if** ( UAV <sub>$j$</sub>  is within the  $comm\_range$  of UAV <sub>$i$</sub>  ):  
         add UAV <sub>$j$</sub>  to  $U\_list$   
**END for**  
 $new\_e\_list \leftarrow \emptyset$   
 #Calculate the closest target to UAV <sub>$i$</sub>  and record it  
 $new\_e\_list[i] \leftarrow \text{record}(\text{UAV}_i)$   
**for**  $j=0$  to count (UAVs) **do**:  
      $cache \leftarrow \emptyset$   
     **if** ( $new\_e\_list[j]$  has no record), **then**:  
         **for**  $k=0$  to count( $U\_list$ ) **do**:  
             **if** ( $e_{list,k}$  has a record about UAV <sub>$j$</sub> ), **then**:  
                  $cache \leftarrow cache + \text{record}(\text{UAV}_j)$   
         **END for**  
         #Find the latest record in cache, update list  
          $new\_e\_list \leftarrow \text{update}(new\_e\_list, cache, j)$   
     **END for**

Algorithm 1: UAVs communication.

The definition of UAVs movement rules is as follows: each UAV has 8 selectable search directions at each time step. The position of UAV<sub>i</sub> at time step  $t$  is denoted as  $L(u_{i,t})$ , which is updated by the selected action  $a=\Delta(x, y)$ , represented as:

$$\begin{cases} \partial L(u_{i,t})/\partial x = \partial L(u_{i,t}, x)/\partial x + \Delta x \\ \partial L(u_{i,t})/\partial y = \partial L(u_{i,t}, y)/\partial y + \Delta y \end{cases} \quad (8)$$

$$\Delta(x, y) = \begin{cases} (1,0), & \text{if } a = 0 \text{ (east)} \\ (0,1), & \text{if } a = 1 \text{ (north)} \\ (-1,0), & \text{if } a = 2 \text{ (west)} \\ (0,-1), & \text{if } a = 3 \text{ (south)} \\ (1,1), & \text{if } a = 4 \text{ (east north)} \\ (-1,1), & \text{if } a = 5 \text{ (west north)} \\ (1,-1), & \text{if } a = 6 \text{ (east south)} \\ (-1,-1), & \text{if } a = 7 \text{ (west south)} \end{cases} \quad (9)$$

Due to the presence of obstacles and area boundaries, at certain times, the movement actions of the UAV may become unavailable, as shown in Figure 2. For units near obstacles or at the edge of the map, the corresponding action selection will become unavailable.

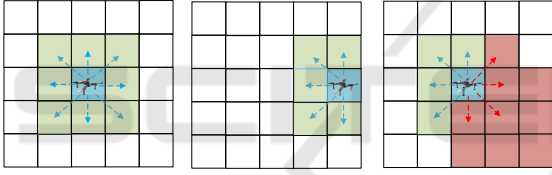


Figure 2 Schematic diagram of UAV action selection.

**Target model:** some targets can be moved to adjacent grids according to the same movement rules as UAVs. Some targets are immovable.

**Obstacle model:** There are multiple obstacles at random positions within the designated area. To guarantee the solvability of the overall problem, we define an obstacle model in its initial state, subject to the following constraints:

$$\nexists z \mid L(z) = L(\forall u_0) \text{ or } L(z) = L(\forall tar_0) \quad (10)$$

$$\nexists z \mid sp(\forall u, z) = 0 \text{ or } sp(\forall tar, z) = 0 \quad (11)$$

Constraint (10) indicates that the generation of obstacles cannot coincide with the positions of the target and the UAV. For constraint (11),  $sp(\cdot)$  is the number of positions that can be reached by the computing unit. In the case of complete obstacle free and map boundary free influence,  $sp(\cdot)=8$ . This constraint indicates that obstacles cannot completely surround the UAV and target, making it impossible for the UAV to move or for the target location to be reached.

### 3 LEARNING FRAMEWORK

For multi-UAV path planning, UAVs are required to continuously detect and update information during flight. However, due to hardware limitations and other factors, they often cannot accurately observe the overall environment. Consequently, UAV path planning is aptly considered as a POMDP, and MARL is one of the most efficient algorithms to solve POMDP problems.

In this section, we introduce a Learning Framework that reconstructs the scenarios and models established in Section 2 into POMDP components. Subsequently, we design a simulation flow to generate the episodes required for training the MARL algorithm. Lastly, we detail how the MARL algorithm interacts with the episode data to optimize network parameters and produce drone actions that are responsive to episode generation.

#### 3.1 Scenario Reconstructing

To solve the problem built by System Framework. We reconstruct the scenario and models proposed by the System Framework as POMDP system.

**Agent:** A UAV is defined as an agent in the environment. The agent obtains information about the surrounding environment from its own sensors, selects an action and provides feedback to the system.

**A:** the action of the UAV at time  $t$  is expressed as:

$$A_t = \{a_{1,t}, a_{2,t}, \dots, a_{n,t}\} \quad (12)$$

Where  $a_{i,t}$  represents the encoding of the movement rules defined in Section 2.2.

**O:** Each agent can observe its own information and some environment information, expressed as:

$$O_t = \{o_{1,t}, o_{2,t}, \dots, o_{n,t}\} \quad (13)$$

$$o_{i,t} = \{of_{i,t}, ef_{i,t}\} \quad (14)$$

$$of_{i,t} = \{L(u_{i,t}), d_{range(u_i)}, L(min_{e_{i,t}}), D(min_{e_{i,t}}, u_{i,t}), e_{list}\} \quad (15)$$

$$ef_{i,t} = \{h(u_{i,t}, E_t)\} \quad (16)$$

$O_t$  represents the sum of observation information obtained by all agents at time  $t$  in the current environment.  $o_{i,t}$  represents the observation information of the agent  $i$  at time  $t$ , which consists of two parts. For  $of_{i,t}$ ,  $L(u_{i,t})$  represents the coordinates of agent  $i$  in the map at time  $t$ ,  $d_r(u_i)$  represents the sensing range of UAV  $i$ .  $L(mt_{i,t})$  represents the coordinate position



of the target closest to the agent  $i$  at time  $t$ .  $D(mtar_{i,t}, u_{i,t})$  represents the distance between the target and the UAV. For  $ef_{i,t}$ ,  $h(u_{i,t}, E_t)$  means that at time  $t$ , the targets in each cell within the detection range  $d_r$ .

S: The overall state of the system is the sum of global observation information and timestamp information, expressed as:

$$S_t = \{O_t, t/T\} \quad (17)$$

T is the maximum that the timestamp can advance to, and  $t/T$  indicates the time advance of the current environment.

R: The value calculated by the system according to the current environment information is used to guide Q network fitting. According to the problem definition, we build the reward function as follows:

$$R_t = count(tar'_t) - \frac{d_{t,u,e}}{L_x} + bw \quad (18)$$

$count(tar'_t)$  represents the number of targets found at time  $t$ .  $d_{t,u,e}$  represents the sum of the distance between each UAV  $u$  and its nearest target  $e$  at time  $t$ . Directly put  $d_{t,u,e}$  into the reward value is likely to dilute other incentives factor, So we use  $L_x$  to narrow its processing.  $bw$  is an indication function that, at the end of an episode,  $bw=1$  if battle\_won status has been reached,  $bw=0$  otherwise.

### 3.2 Simulation Algorithm

In this paper, the purpose of repeating environmental simulations is to obtain a large number of "episodes". The simulation events of the environment follow the principle of discrete event simulation. Episode is the complete process of an intelligent agent starting to explore the environment and reaching a termination state (or reaching a predetermined step limit). In the MARL framework, the intelligent agent network can learn from a large amount of "episode" data, continuously optimize network parameters, thereby improving decision-making efficiency and ultimately achieving intelligent acquisition of excellent strategies.

The specific process of environment simulation is: (1) input the episode and time step  $t$  to be updated. Obtain the actions of the UAVs. The actions come from the output of the Q network. (2) Execute the actions to update the status of the UAVs. (3) Targets movement. (4) UAVs communicate with each other to update their observations. (5) To calculate the overall reward. According to RL definition, it is necessary to calculate the difference between the reward value of this time step and the reward value of the previous time step as the one-step reward for an episode. (6) Record environmental information. (7) Check if the

environment has reached the 'battle won' state. If it has, stop the environment and end the episode early. (8) Check if the timestamp of the environment has reached the maximum number of advances, to reach the end of the episode. (9) Output updated episode. Algorithm 2 describes the above process, where the code marked with \* is the behaviours that requires interaction with MARL.

**Input:** episode,  $t$   
**Result:** updated episode  
 history\_reward  $\leftarrow 0$ , reward  $\leftarrow 0$   
 done  $\leftarrow$  False  
 episode  $\leftarrow \emptyset$   
 \*Obtain\_actions from Q network  
 UAVs  $\leftarrow$  UAVs\_move(UAVs, actions)  
 targets  $\leftarrow$  Targets\_move(targets, obstacles)  
 UAVs  $\leftarrow$  UAVs\_communicate(UAVs)  
 \*reward  $\leftarrow$  Get\_reward(UAVs, targets) #eq17  
 \*reward  $\leftarrow$  reward - history\_reward  
 \*history\_reward  $\leftarrow$  reward  
 terminated  $\leftarrow$  False  
**if** episode gets victory conditions, **then**:  
   battle\_won  $\leftarrow$  True  
   done  $\leftarrow$  True  
**if**  $t$  reaches the maximum simulation time  $T$ , **then**:  
   terminated  $\leftarrow$  True  
   done  $\leftarrow$  True  
 episode  $\leftarrow$  update(episode)

Algorithm 2: Simulation: update episode.

### 3.3 MARL Learning Procedure

MARL algorithms need to adaptively learn how to control the UAV to complete the mission according to real-time episode information.

The network that controls the action of the agent in MARL is called Q network, and the Q network training process is as follows: (1) initialize Q network parameter  $\theta$  and target network parameter  $\theta'$ , total training time steps  $T$  (2) Create two timers, train\_t to record the training progress and e\_t to record the progress of the episode. Initialize an episode. Initialize buffer D (3) The movements of the UAVs are obtained from the Q network, the status of the episode is updated, and the data is stored in D. (4) When the data in D is sufficient for network training, parameters  $\theta$  of the main network and  $\theta'$  of the target network are trained. (5) When the capacity of D is full, it is cleaned. The cleanup method is usually to delete some of the data that enters the buffer first. (6) get training-finished  $\theta$ .

**Inputs:** Initialize parameters  $\theta$  and  $\theta^-$ ,  $T$

**Results:** training completed  $\theta$  and  $\theta^-$

Initialize replay buffer  $D$ , episode

$\text{train\_t} \leftarrow 0$

$e\_t \leftarrow 0$

Reset the episode

**while**  $t \leq T$  **do:**

$\text{actions} \leftarrow \varepsilon\_greedy(\text{UAVs}, Q(\theta^-))$

    # Algorithm2

$\text{episode} \leftarrow \text{update\_episode}(\text{episode}, t)$

$\text{train\_t} \leftarrow \text{train\_t} + 1$

$e\_t \leftarrow e\_t + 1$

$\text{episode} \leftarrow \text{add\_steps}(\text{episode})$

**if** (episode has been finished), **then:**

        Reset the episode

$e\_t = 0$

$D \leftarrow \text{update\_episode}(\text{episode})$

**if** (The episode stored in  $D$  is enough

to train the  $Q$  network), **then:**

        Sample a random batch of episode in  $D$

        \*Update the parameters of network  $\theta$

$c \leftarrow 0$

**if** ( $\theta$  has been trained step  $c$ ), **then:**

            \*Update the parameters of network  $\theta^-$

**if** ( $\text{capacity}(D) + \text{capacity}(e) \geq M$ ), **then:**

$D \leftarrow \text{clean\_buffer}(D)$

**END while**

Algorithm 3: MARL learns environment information and outputs UAVs actions.

In algorithm 3, the parameter update of the target network  $\theta^-$  behind that of the main network  $\theta$ . This can avoid the frequent change of the target value, reduce the instability in the training process, and make the main network converge to the optimal strategy more smoothly. QMIX uses the Mixing Network to mix the individual  $Q$  values of multiple agents into a global  $Q$  value. The global  $Q$  value represents the expected return of all agents acting together. VAN obtains this global  $Q$  value through a linear function, and IQL does not consider global  $Q$  values.

## 4 SIMULATION RESULT AND ANALYSIS

In this section, MARL algorithms: IQL, VDN and QMIX, are tested in the scenarios with different obstacle rate settings to test the effectiveness of the Extensible MARL Framework. Then the experimental results are described and analysed.

### 4.1 Experiment Settings

This section introduces the operating environment of the experiment, the setting of MARL algorithm hyperparameters and the setting of simulation environment. The experimental hardware are: NVIDIA GeForce RTX 3080Ti and AMD EPYC 9754. The softwares are Ubuntu22.04, torch 2.3.0&CUDA 12.1, and PYMARL (Samvelyan, M. et al. 2019). Settings of the MARL hyper-parameters are: batch size:64, buffer\_size:5000, and lr:0.001. We conducted experiments on maps with grid sizes of  $20 \times 20$ . Obstacle rate refers to the percentage of cells set as obstacles, which is set to 20 or 40. The scenario involves 6 agents and 6 targets. For a single agent,  $dr=1$  and  $dc=1$ . The maximum of simulation time is 200.

### 4.2 Analysis of Algorithm Performance

In this section, we analyse the performance of three MARL algorithms: IQL, VDN, and QMIX. Figures 3 and 4 show the variation of reward values over simulation time for three algorithms in a simulation environment with a map size of  $20 \times 20$ .  $T$  is the total running time of the simulation environment, measured in millions. Statistics are performed at fixed intervals of 10k time steps, and the average value of 10k time steps is taken as the experimental result. It can be seen that IQL and VDN fit faster than QMIX. When the obstacle rate is 20, the reward value of IQL and VDN is slightly higher compared to QMIX. When the obstacle rate is 40, the performance of the VDN algorithm is slightly higher. This is because QMIX requires additional use of global information to train a hypernetwork. In our simulation environment, using a combination of local observations as global information may not provide sufficient data for the hypernetwork. Additionally, it is possible that the structure of QMIX's hypernetwork is not suitable for our task.

Table 1 shows the comparison of the average reward values of the three algorithms in the last 50 time steps. It can be seen from the time-reward curve that the three algorithms are close to fitting when approaching the end of training. By comparing the average reward of the three algorithms in the last 50 Time steps, the specific performance gap of the algorithms can be more intuitively identified. It can be seen that VDN performs slightly better than the other two algorithms. This is because VDN uses linear functions to combine the  $Q$  values of agents, which avoids the lack of interaction between agents like IQL, and the difficulty of combining  $Q$  values caused using complex hypernetworks like QMIX.

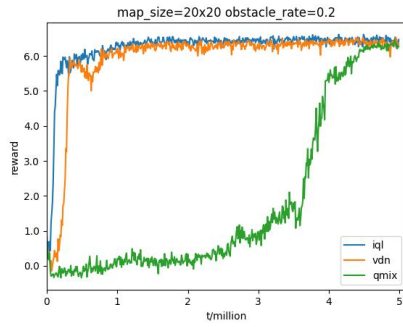


Figure 3 Time-reward curve of three algorithms at an obstacle rate of 20.

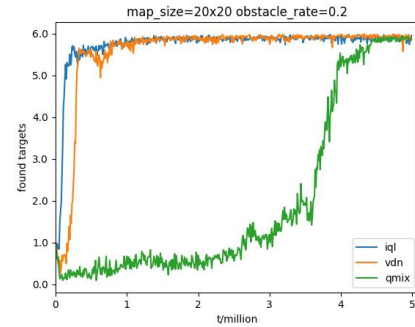


Figure 5 Time-Number of targets found curve of three algorithms at an obstacle rate of 20.

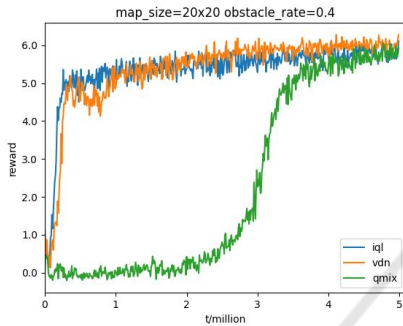


Figure 4 Time-reward curve of three algorithms at an obstacle rate of 20.

Table 1 Comparison of the average reward values of the three algorithms in the last 50 time steps.

Obstacle rate (%)	Method	Reward
20	IQL	6.45
20	VDN	6.35
20	QMIX	6.27
40	IQL	5.81
40	VDN	6.01
40	QMIX	5.75

### 4.3 Analysis of Mission Completion Level

Figure 5 and Figure 6 show the time-target discovery number curves of the three algorithms, and Table 2 shows how many targets were discovered by each of the three algorithms in the last 50 time steps. The results of this experiment are similar to result of the reward comparison experiment, but the performance gap between the algorithms is not as significant as the previous experiment. In the case where the total number of target points is 6, the number of targets found using the three algorithms exceeds 5, indicating that Extensible MARL Framework can effectively complete the path planning task.

Table 2: Comparison of the average number of targets found of the three algorithms in the last 50 time steps.

Obstacle rate(%)	Method	Number of targets found
20	IQL	5.89
20	VDN	5.91
20	QMIX	5.86
40	IQL	5.38
40	VDN	5.64
40	QMIX	5.43

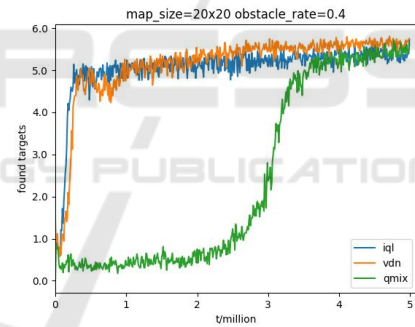


Figure 6 Time-Number of targets found curve of three algorithms at an obstacle rate of 40.

## 5 CONCLUSION

In order to solve the problem of multi-UAV cooperative path planning, we propose the Extensible MARL Framework. Extensible MARL Framework can be applied to scenarios built with a variety of environmental factors and is compatible with a variety of MARL algorithms. The Extensible MARL Framework consists of two parts, the system framework and the learning framework. The system framework defines the scenario, including the problems to be solved, the models, and the behavioural interactions between the models. The learning framework aims to reconstruct the problems and models of the system

framework into POMDP, then solve the problems of the system framework through MARL algorithm.

In the experiment part, to verify the validity of Extensible MARL Framework, the paper tests three MARL algorithms: IQL, VDN and QMIX, and it evaluates these algorithms in two scenarios featuring different obstacle rates: 20% for sparse and 40% for dense. The experiment results show that IQL and VDN adapt to the environment faster than QMIX, and the reward value of IQL and VDN is slightly higher than QMIX when the proportion of obstacles is 20%. When the proportion of obstacles increases to 40%, the performance of the VDN algorithm is slightly higher than the other two algorithms.

In future research, we will further optimize the algorithm for the poor performance of QMIX's hybrid network. At the same time, we will design more dynamic complex scenarios to test the robustness of various algorithms. At the same time, we consider designing more realistic experimental scenarios to ensure that the MARL algorithm can be truly integrated with practical applications.

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