

Remarkable Trinity at War: Government, Armed Forces and Society in Russian and Ukrainian Strategic Endurance

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Abstract

Purpose: The goal of the current study is to make comparison between Russia and Ukraine strategic endurance in the full-scale war from 24 February 2022 to 8 August 2026 by the model of Clausewitz's 'remarkable trinity'. It poses the question of the relationship between government, armed forces and society to link political purpose, military adaptation and social willingness with staying power in prolonged attrition.

Research Methodology: The design of the research is a qualitative comparative case-study, based on documentary evidence, public-opinion data, specialist military assessments and a nongraphic pictorial corpus. Sources are: SIPRI, Kiel Institute, World Bank, RUSI, CSIS, KIIS, Levada Center and Chatham House. Three propositions are evaluated by directed content and thematic analysis through which the relationships between the vertices are traced.

Outcome: Strategic endurance is seen in both states, albeit in different forms. Russia is more dependent on the high level of fiscal-industrial mobilisation, massive replacement, and a growing institutionalised system of military learning. Ukraine is a mixture of coalition diplomacy, civic mobilisation, and quick commercial innovations. The main pressures on Russia are shrinking fiscal space and labour shortages and force-quality costs, while the main pressures on Ukraine are extreme relative military burden, manpower shortage, damage to infrastructure, dependency on aid, and cumulative fatigue.

Conclusions: Strategic endurance is not just a matter of money, soldiers or public support, but a relationship. It survives when policy, military learning and societal commitment are suitably aligned to absorb shocks. While cross-vertex substitution can delay failure - alliances can increase state capacity, and technology can compensate for some weakness in manpower - eventually, a weakness at one vertex limits constraints on the other two.

Limitation: This study is based on open sources created during a war that is still ongoing. Note that Russian and Ukrainian survey data are not directly comparable and that military and fiscal data are subject to revision and strategic communication.

Contributions: The paper illustrates Clausewitz's three cornerstones of Passion, Chance and Policy in relation to Clausewitz's social correspondence and create a Strategic Endurance Trinity Framework (SETF) for comparing how governments, armed forces and societies sustain protracted interstate war.

Keywords: *Clausewitz; remarkable trinity; strategic endurance; Russia-Ukraine War; armed forces; society; government; attrition*

1. Introduction

The Russia-Ukraine war is a tough test of national stamina. Ukraine's resistance and counteroffensives did not bring the war to an end, as did Russia's failure to achieve a quick political outcome with its invasion in February 2022. The battle became one of long-range fire-fights, drone attacks, changing out troops, infrastructure, outside help and political acceptance. The strategic issue, accordingly, is not just who can gain ground, but which political community is able to sustain increasing costs in terms of the resources, institutions, and human will required to establish organised coercive power.

This problem calls for return to Clausewitz's 'remarkable trinity'. The idea is often restricted to people, army and government but primary trinity is more abstract: passion and violence; chance and probability and war's subordination to policy and reason. Clausewitz linked these tendencies in particular with the people,

commander and army and the government (Clausewitz, 1984). This paper, following Villacres and Bassford (1995), does not view the trinity as the society, the armed forces and the government but, instead, as institutional correspondences through which the deeper tendencies interact.

Strategic endurance is the ability of a state and political society to endure war with purpose and absorb the military, economic and social costs over time. It is not the same as victory on the field or the level of morale or resources. Castillo (2014) makes a connection between military cohesion and national conditions, and Gady and Kofman (2024) demonstrate how attrition erodes the quality of a force and requires reconstitution. This study builds on this understanding with regard to the government-military-society nexus: endurance is the repeated reproduction of usable state capacity, effective combat power and legitimate sacrifice.

Russia and Ukraine are illustrative dyad because both have endured multiple shocks in different ways. Russia went into the full-scale war with more numbers, size, and depth of defence industry. Ukraine has shouldered a far greater military burden, relative to its size, and also expanded its own capability by creating coalitions and networks of external partners, civic groups and commercial defence innovation. Their ongoing resistance, thus, puts to the test whether endurance is a result of aggregate resources or of political direction, military regeneration, and social commitment.

The research question is: How have government, armed forces and society interacted to shape Russian and Ukrainian strategic endurance from 24 February 2022 to 8 August 2026? The premise is that endurance is a coupled system. The Government can no longer make up for the lack of learning in the military; its men and its production cannot be steadily expanded; and the sacrifice of the people cannot be maintained without a real meaning and sense of justice. The vertices must be mutually reinforcing under friction accumulation for long term endurance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Remarkable Trinity

Clausewitz writes that 'war is a dance of passion and violence, of chance and probability, of rational subordination to policy' (Clausewitz, 1984). The people, commander and army, and government are social correspondences, not mechanical equivalents of these tendencies. In a space where ministries, private technology companies, volunteer networks and allies exist, that distinction is important. Villacres and Bassford (1995) thus interpreted the trinity as one of a variable relationship. Armed forces capture uncertainty, learning and regeneration, society mobilisation, legitimacy and fatigue and government war aims, resources, administration and coalition strategy. The focus of the analysis is their interaction.

2.2 Strategic Endurance and War

Endurance is the strategic effectiveness after the failure of Rapid Decision and the cumulative costs start to mold the belligerents. Castillo (2014) emphasises cohesion and its national foundations. Staying power also involves replacement, fiscal extraction, industrial repair, infrastructure protection and ongoing burden acceptance in protracted interstate war. The Russo-Ukrainian battlefield is becoming more attritional and preservation and regeneration are key components of strategy, according to Gady and Kofman (2024). Endurance is thus a path-dependent phenomenon: today's losses and mobilisation decisions influence tomorrow's force quality, fiscal space and social tolerance.

2.3 Government and Wartime State Capacity

Government turns political intent into budgets, mobilisation, production and alliances. Russia enjoys significant autonomy of its resources and a centralised fiscal-industrial guidance system. According to Cooper (2026), Russia spent approximately 16 trillion roubles on the military in 2025 (7.5 per cent of GDP) and planned to spend slightly less for the first time in 2026 as inflation and fiscal pressures weighed in. Ukraine is a network country, with outstanding financial mobilisation at home and foreign funding, weaponry and manufacturing. The rise in allocations was particularly pronounced in Europe, where they grew sharply in 2025 as US funding declined, indicating that coalition management is an integral part of the state capacity of Ukraine (Trebesch & Nishikawa, 2026).

2.4 Armed Forces: Cohesion, Adaptation and Regeneration

The strength of the military is based upon the ability to generate combat power over and over again. Watling and Reynolds (2025) explain how both armies evolved during close combat, fire, logistics, engineering, medical and air defence. Ukraine has adopted civilian engineering, commercial technology, and more rapid acquisition, thus reducing the feedback loop from front line users to suppliers. Russia has also embedded its

learning from initial mistakes into its institutional frameworks, connecting battlefield learning to doctrine, industry and training, as Massicot (2025) does. These are processes that maintain combat, not processes that eliminate manpower, leadership, training and equipment quality constraints.

2.5 Society: Mobilisation, Legitimacy and War-Weariness

Societal endurance involves volunteering, recruitment, mutual aid, tax compliance, family tolerance of loss, institutional trust and decisions on whether war aims are worth sacrifice. Lutsevych (2025) demonstrates that Ukrainian resilience requires a relationship between the state, communities, citizens, civil society and external supporters. The pattern in Russian society is different: high levels of declared support for the armed forces coexist with a preference for negotiations (Levada Center, 2026). So it is possible to talk of patriotism, acquiescence, incentives, fatigue and desire for peace existing at the same time, rather than as a single continuum of support-opposition.

2.6 Russia-Ukraine War as an Attritional Contest

In 2022, the war shifted from mobile warfare to a more static theatre, filled with drones. The Russians did not get the quick decision they were looking for and then Ukraine's 2023 counteroffensive was met with dug-in defenses, mines, and extensive reconnaissance-strike networks. In 2024-2025, both sides were used to constant vigilance and accurate strikes. Gady and Kofman (2024) and Watling and Reynolds (2025) explain why endurance increasingly hinged on the ability to regenerate formations, replenish ammunition and drones, and shield logistics and gain pace over the adversary's countermeasures.

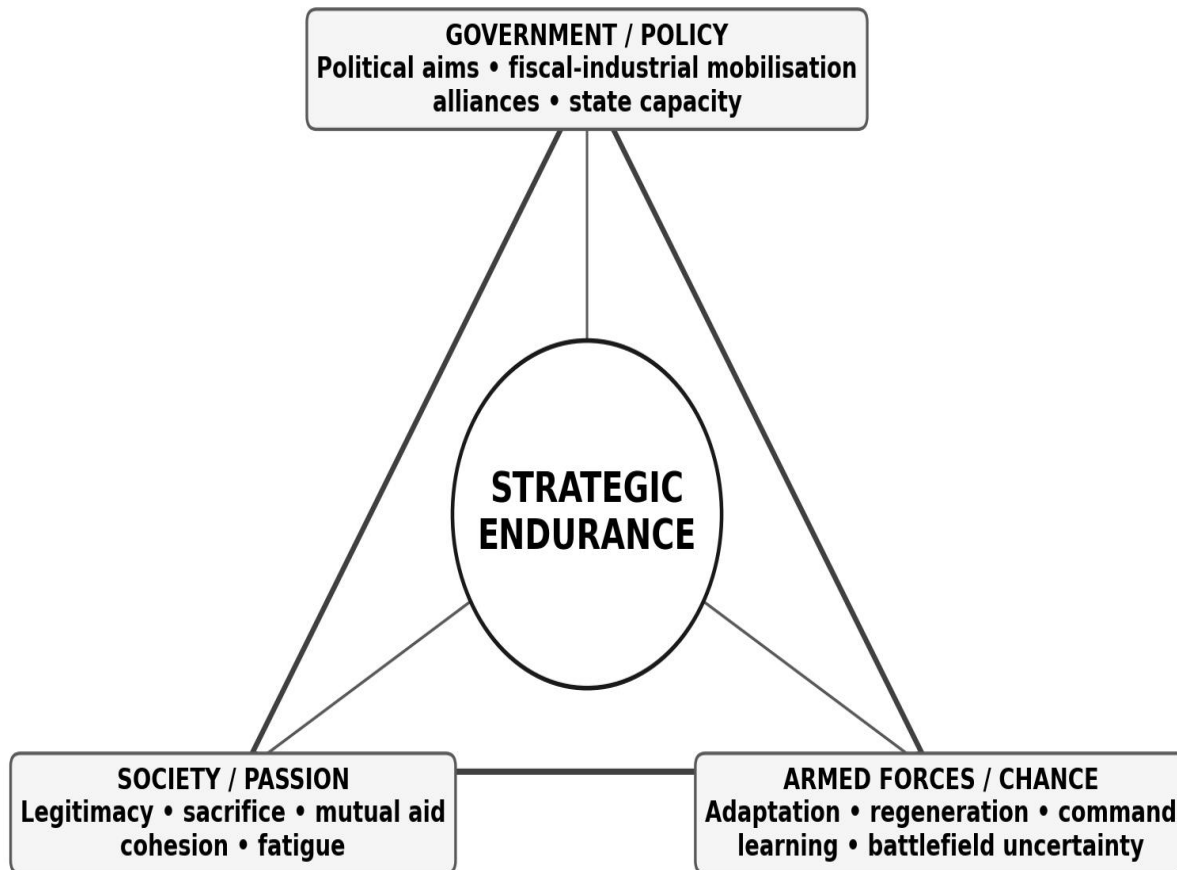
2.7 Empirical Review

There is an abundant but fragmented empirical literature. SIPRI and Kiel measure military burdens, fiscal pressure and aid, while RUSI, CSIS and Massicot (2025) focus on military adaptation, and KIIS and Levada Center measure public attitudes and Chatham House documents Ukrainian civic participation and World Bank measures destruction. These literatures shed light on one realm of politics at the expense of the other, and less often collectively do so on compensation and constraint of one another by political authority, military regeneration or society. This study aims to fill that gap by positing Clausewitz's trinitarian logic as a relational framework and not a checklist.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

The Strategic Endurance Trinity Framework (SETF) considers government, armed forces and society as institutional correspondences of Clausewitz's tendencies. Governmental endurance turns purpose into money, operation, diplomacy and administration. Military endurance is about cohesion, learning, reconstitution and adaptation – how to control chance. Societal resilience generates legitimacy, solidarity, recruitment, volunteering and acceptance of the burden. Strategic endurance is a product of interaction: a good vertex is only useful if it supports the other vertices and not just if it covers up their deficiencies.

The SETF allows for temporary substitution between vertices. Alliances can increase the size of a government's resources; technology can mitigate the shortage of manpower; civic organisations can fill the void in logistics; and incentives can keep some people on board when initial enthusiasm wanes. However, substitution is limited. External assistance can vary, drones will never replace all trained individuals and compliance can be maintained by force and trust undermined. Endurance is thus a dynamic balance of bottlenecks, and continued stress at one vertex escalates the cost of retaining the other two and can eventually grow to systemic levels.



Endurance is relational: a persistent weakness at one vertex can constrain strengths at the others.

Figure 1. Strategic Endurance Trinity Framework (SETF)

Source: Author's conceptual synthesis from Clausewitz (1984), Villacres and Bassford (1995), and Castillo (2014).

The Strategic Endurance Trinity Framework is shown in figure 1. Government, armed forces and society are institutional correspondences of policy, chance and passion, not a literal replacement of Clausewitz's primary trinity. Endurance is a product of interaction: budgets and alliances influence the regeneration of forces, battlefield results influence the revision of policy, recruitment, volunteering and fatigue influence the social cost of strategy. The primary expectation of the framework is relational, temporary compensation is acceptable, but if a vertex fails, the costs of the failed vertex may become a limitation for other two vertices.

2.9 Propositions

P1: The more government is able to draw on continuous access to fiscal, industrial and external resources, and maintain a viable balance between war goals and means, the greater its capacity for strategic endurance.

P2: P2: Armed-forces endurance is the rate of adaptation, training and replacement to generate effective combat power relative to battlefield losses and technological change.

P3: Willingness to pay costs continues to be maintained by legitimacy, mutual aid and perceived necessity; but once a war has been ongoing for a while there is fatigue, and overall endurance depends on the relationship between society, army and government more than on the declared willingness to pay costs.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study is based on a qualitative comparative case study design from 24 February 2022 to 8 August 2026. Russia and Ukraine are paired cases in the same conflict system, but with different types of political institutions, resource bases, alliances and modes of social mobilisation. The design is not predictive and is oriented towards mechanisms that connect the linkage between the government, armed forces and society to endure. Case-study research is suitable when contemporary causal processes are at work and are related to the institution and context, and they cannot be separated completely from their real world context (Yin, 2018).

3.2 Method of Data Collection

The data sources were secondary documentary sources, with expenditure data sourced from SIPRI and Kiel, fiscal pressure and aid data sourced from fiscal pressure and aid from SIPRI, RDNA5 for reconstruction needs, military adaptation data sourced from RUSI, CSIS and Foreign Affairs, and theory and method data sourced from scholarly literature. Documentary analysis provides the ability to compare over time; it also allows source identification and critical analysis of claims that may be disputed in wartime (Bowen, 2009).

3.3 Pictorial Evidence

The pictorial corpus is based on the non-graphic visual approach of the sample article. It includes two images from civilian camouflage-net making in Ukraine and Russia, made public with the CC BY 4.0 license, and a number of figures created by the author. Casualty image not used. Photographs are used to depict the kinds of civilian war-support activities but not to show the national extent or relative intensity. Resource burdened, military learning and social indicators are visualised in forms of charts and diagrams. Each figure is interpreted following an approximately 80 word text and is labelled and sourced.

3.4 Analytical Procedure: Content and Thematic Analysis

The coding of the corpus was done within three themes: governmental mobilisation, adaptation of the armed-forces and endurance of the society. Evidence was arranged chronologically and comparatively, and evaluated with respect to the propositions. Analyses were both directed content analysis and thematic synthesis, which were used to trace mechanisms and qualifying cases, not to estimate statistical causality (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Polling was understood within each survey context and Russian and Ukrainian percentages were not equated. Cross-vertex compensation, SETF bottlenecks and strain transfer were explored in the last stage.

3.5 Trustworthiness and Limitations of the Method

Triangulation, chronological cross-checking and separation of measured indicators and inference added to trustworthiness. No one could take belligerent claims on faith, that is, simply because they were officially recognized. With regards to polling, special care needs to be taken as KIIS encompasses adults in government-controlled Ukrainian territory and doesn't include citizens who live outside Ukraine, while Russian polling takes place in a more limited environment. Photographs may not be representative; they are illustrations selected. The study thus elucidates comparative mechanisms and stress patterns, and not specific causal weights, casualty ratios or deterministic collapse thresholds.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Proposition 1: Governmental Direction and Resource Mobilisation Condition Strategic Endurance

The evidence is relevant to P1, and shows two models of governmental endurance. Based on a larger economic and industrial base, the Russian one is more independent and centralised in its character. Ukraine's is networked: domestic mobilisation is not different from coalition finance and weaponry and external production. Fetches and timetables of external assistance are a wartime state capacity in Ukraine. Russia, thus, is more vulnerable to in-resource degradation, Ukraine more vulnerable to coalition timing and political continuity.

The asymmetry is apparent in SIPRI's 2025 estimates. Estimates for military expenditures for Russia are \$190 billion and for Ukraine, \$84.1 billion. However, the situation was much worse in Ukraine, with 40 per cent of GDP and 63 per cent of government spending going to defence, while Russia spent 7.5 per cent of GDP and 20 per cent of government spending on defence (Liang et al., 2026). As such, Russia has much more autonomy in scale and Ukraine has to maintain a high level of civilian administration and infrastructure while burdened with an extraordinary military burden. External budget support is not analytically "outside" Ukraine's effective governmental endurance but contributes to making it bigger.

Russia has a lot of governmental staying power and it is getting more costly. According to Cooper (2026), the military expenditure will be around 7.5 per cent of GDP in 2025, that is 16 trillion roubles. According to estimates by the Kiel Institute, by April 2026, the assets of the liquid National Wealth Fund had shrunk from 6.5 per cent of GDP at the beginning of the war to 1.8 per cent, while the pressure of the deficits and the reduction in oil and gas income had further lowered the shock-absorbing capacity. This does not indicate that the structure is about to collapse. It indicates that the future cost of policy choice is rising due to buffers being used up for endurance.

The resilience of Ukraine's Government hinges on turning external pledges into operational capacity. European military-aid allocations in 2025 were 67 per cent higher than the annual average for 2022-2024, and financial/humanitarian allocations 59 per cent, more than making up for the decline in new US allocations in 2025, according to Trebesch and Nishikawa (2026). There was also a significant increase in direct donor arrangements with Ukrainian defence industry. This connects diplomacy, home front production and demand on the battlefield. It is its predictability that makes it vulnerable; if it is late or concentrated in political areas, gaps can occur despite big headline figures.

The civilian opportunity cost is still high. RDNA5 estimated almost \$588 billion in Ukrainian recovery and reconstruction needs for the decade after 2025, nearly three times estimated 2025 nominal GDP (World Bank et al., 2026). Government is thus required to conduct a war simultaneously maintaining the energy, transportation and a social service system and houses. This is Clausewitzian policy under friction: political leadership has to ensure that military purpose is always linked to a state that is still working and still defended by the people even when it is subject to extreme resource dilation.

Governmental Resource Mobilisation: Scale and Relative Burden

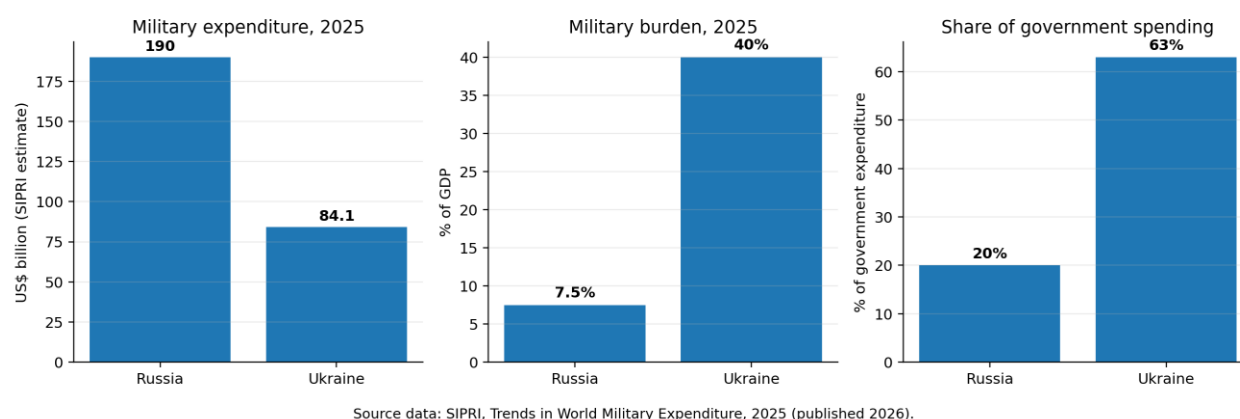


Figure 2. Comparative military resource burden in Russia and Ukraine, 2025

Source: Author's chart from SIPRI (2026).

Figure 2 breaks down military spending between absolute and national burden. Although Russia is spending much more in 2025, Ukraine was spending a significantly higher percentage of GDP and government spending on its armed forces. The comparison illustrates that the governmental endurance can't merely be read from the dollar totals. Russia's strength lies in its autonomy, Ukraine's strength in fiscal extremity, which is cushioned by coalition financing and arms. These are not measures of effectiveness of the military, but measures of mobilisation of resources – and the same amount can be spent with varying resources with varying effectiveness on the battlefield.

The results are in agreement with P1 but with an important qualification. Scale enhances shock absorption, and endurance is reliant on conversion and replenishment. Russia has the potential to mobilise more resources domestically, but the conflict reduces fiscal and labour buffers. Effective resource frontier is larger through diplomacy, though Ukraine's domestic base is smaller and is damaged. Resilience of the government is greatest when war goals, budgets, access to industry and to the outside world are still coherent; it is reduced when the mounting demands and needs of military effort start to affect the administrative and social base for further mobilisation.

4.2 Proposition 2: Armed Forces Endure Through Adaptation and Regeneration, Not Static Force Size

P2 receives good support. The war did not only bring retribution to those who assumed in the pre-war era that doctrine, technology and organisation were constants that they could bank. The failure of the rapid decision-making process in Russia resulted in changes in the force generation process and in the command and drone integration process. The early flexibility of Ukraine also proved to be not enough as the attrition continued to grow. The need for both armies was to replace losses, train troops, change formations and incorporate new technology at unprecedented rates. Thus military endurance does not seem to be just the maintenance of the force per se, but the continual recreation of the force as effective combat power as the enemy continuously alters the problem.

Watling and Reynolds (2025) explain adaptation and counter-adaptation in the realm of fires, close combat, engineering, logistics and air defence. By late 2025, RUSI noted that Ukraine had been trialing novel approaches to the combined arms approach and Russia's attempts to incorporate UAV reconnaissance, electronic warfare (EW), and fires against the Ukrainian drone industry (Watling, 2025). There is thus a half-life for adaptation: advantage is only gained from an innovation until the opponent learns of it, copies it or counteracts it. Endurance is the speed of institutionalisation of learning to create successive advantages and not relying on one technological solution.

After the early war successes, Russian adaptation has become more institutionalised. Massicot (2025) refers to a learning ecosystem that connects lessons learnt on the battlefield with defence manufacturing, doctrine, universities and training. Scale allows for replacement but it poses a quality problem. Gady and Kofman (2024) emphasize that attrition affects the quality; one can not replace an experienced leader, specialists or cohesive formations at once with newly recruited personnel. The question thus becomes whether the Russian

productivity of both industrial output and personnel can produce combat capability faster than it can lose experience and organisational coherence through losses.

Ukraine is more dependent on distributed innovation and quick turnaround of acquisitions. According to Bondar (2025a), there is a transition to commercial companies/civilian engineers, as well as simplified testing and procurement. Her subsequent research outlines a blended digital system that connects units and ministries with suppliers via quicker feedback (Bondar, 2025b). This has been particularly significant in the field of unmanned systems and software. Very important constraints do exist: decentralisation results in issues of interoperability and scaling, and tactical innovation does not replace trained infantry, air defence, rotation time or predictable external supply.

The comparison is an alternative to a militaristic view of strength. Pressure can be maintained by scale; Ukraine will compensate for part of material disadvantage by quicker feedback, commercial technologies and drones; Russia will keep on learning and replacing. Both are however regeneration systems. An armed-forces vertex becomes a bottleneck when the rate of generation of effective combat power is less than the rate of loss to casualties and exhaustion and/or technological obsolescence. It then pushes outwards: more spending by governments, more recruitment, taxes, loss and uncertainty by societies.

Armed-Forces Endurance as Continuous Adaptation and Regeneration

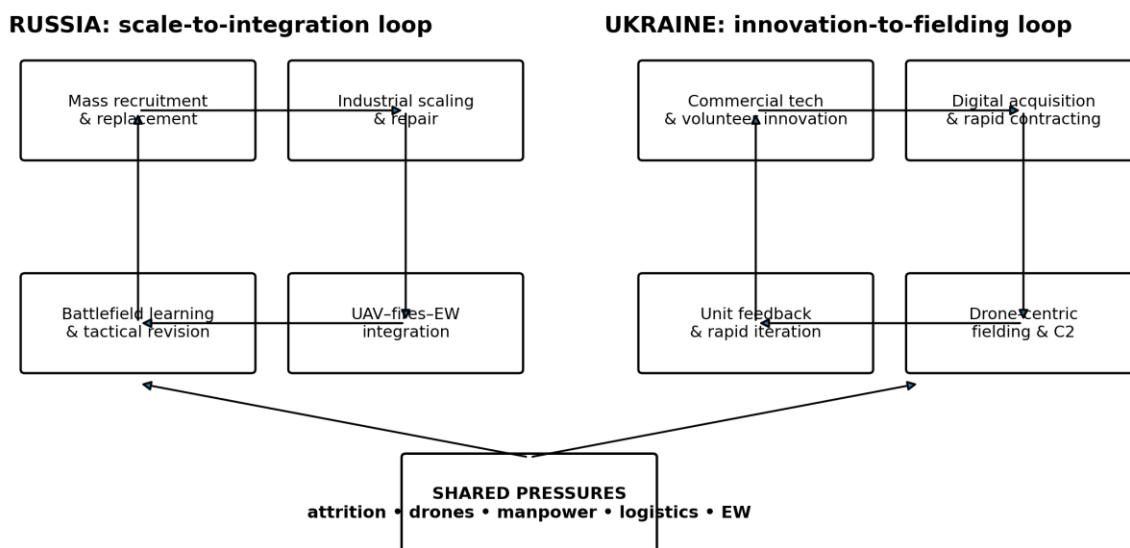


Figure 3. Armed-forces adaptation cycles under attritional pressure

Source: Author's analytical synthesis from Watling and Reynolds (2025), Watling (2025), Bondar (2025a, 2025b), and Gady and Kofman (2024).

Figure 3 shows alternative military adaptation cycles in a similar situation of attritional pressures. The differences between Russia's loop and Ukraine's are the former focusing on mass replacement, industrial scaling, battlefield learning and tighter UAV-fires-EW integration, while the latter is a commercial technology, rapid contracting, unit feedback and drone-centric fielding. Both the loops are not self-sufficient. Both Russia and Ukraine have force-quality and labour-cost issues, and Ukraine has manpower, scaling and external-supply problems. The figure is not quantitative, but rather analytical – it means endurance is simply effected by repeating the learning regeneration cycle more quickly than the attrition and enemy counteradaptation.

The diagram also helps to explain the trinitarian connection. Military learning does not just belong to the military – government and military learning in Ukraine and Russia are linked to the battlefield adaptation via industrial policy and commercial procurement, and recruitment and volunteer innovation links society to the regeneration of the force. Staying power is a continuous production process, involving people, knowledge, equipment and feedback, thus P2 is supported. Even a force that is still fighting can be weakened strategically by increasing the quantity of replacements while decreasing the training, cohesion or capability diversity.

4.3 Proposition 3: Societal Endurance Persists, but Fatigue Changes Its Political Form

Qualified support in P3. Society's survival is too coarse a notion to be contained in the term 'support for the war'. In Ukraine, participation is defined as volunteering, donations, civil defence, family support and defence-technology networks as well as mobilisation. In Russia, volunteering and material assistance to troops also occurs, but the state is more involved in providing recruitment incentives and telling stories. The issue isn't whether either society is uniformly enthusiastic, rather it's whether there's enough participation and enough legitimacy for government and armed forces to reproduce the human and political inputs the war requires.

There's resilience and fatigue in Ukrainian polling. In late April of 2026, 48 per cent of the respondents KIIS asked were prepared to endure the war 'as long as necessary' while 65 per cent were so in the end of January 2026 (KIIS, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c). It's not a mechanical countdown to collapse. Many of those who gave answers with shorter time horizons also rejected peace terms that they thought were not acceptable. The pattern rather suggests a closing of the social space because of a growing salience of psychological, economic and personal costs.

There is an element of institutional trust. KIIS polls between May and early June of 2026 showed that 61 per cent of people trusted President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and increased trust in a number of defence-related figures (KIIS, 2026d). The fact that the feeling of fatigue does not in itself mean that the legitimacy of national defence institutions is lost. The difference is important to the SETF: the social vertex can lose its taste for indefiniteness, yet be very attached to the armed forces and to a fundamental defensive objective.

Polling in Russia indicates a duality. According to Levada Center, 76 per cent supported actions by Russian armed-forces, and 61 per cent wanted Russia to switch to peace negotiations, while 31 per cent wanted to continue military operations in January 2026. Thus, military support and the preference for negotiation are not mutually exclusive. Caution is needed with the figures since the respondents in Russia are in a tightly controlled political and media environment, and the questions vary from those used by KIIS. They recognize the balance between support and war-weariness; not a cross-national ranking.

The socially vertex is temporal and multidimensional. Emergency mobilisation can turn into routine volunteering, recruitment and family adaption, but there are cumulative costs. Ukraine will have to deal with fatigue, the demography and the feeling of inequities in mobilisation; Russia will have to maintain recruitment and acquiesce as costs human and economic widen. In both, endurance is more lasting when sacrifice is attached to a meaningful end and burdens are considered to be legitimate. Coercion and incentives can make for longer participation, but this can change its political nature and the quality of trust that can be used for future mobilisation.

Societal Mobilisation and War-Weariness



Survey questions and political environments differ; the panels are descriptive, not directly comparable.

Figure 4. Civilian mobilisation and selected societal endurance indicators, 2024-2026

Sources: Ukraine photograph - National Police of Ukraine, students making camouflage nets for the Liut Brigade, 12 January 2024, CC BY 4.0; Russia photograph - RG72, camouflage-net volunteers in Tyumen, 16 February 2024, CC BY 4.0 (via Wikimedia Commons). Survey panels: KIIS (2026a, 2026b, 2026c) and Levada Center (2026). Questions and political environments differ; panels are not directly comparable.

Figure 4 is a mix of illustrative photos of civilian making of camouflage-net and some polling indicators. While the pictures depict that war-support activity does not necessarily have to be institutionalized in societies, they are examples not measures of its prevalence. The share of Ukrainians who expressed willingness to stand up for 'as long as necessary' dropped from 65 per cent in January to 48 per cent in April 2026. The January poll in Russia also found 76 per cent in favor of actions by the armed forces and 61 per cent in favor of negotiations. The panels collectively demonstrate that there is no contradiction between participation, endurance, fatigue and peace preferences.

The evidence is mixed and that's why it's good for P3. They don't have to be enthusiastic to endure, nor does preference for negotiations mean lack of military legitimacy. The more serious warning is a misalignment in relationships. When governments see social tolerance as boundless or when for some reason the military needs surpass what citizens believe they need or deserve, society can stop reinforcing the other vertices. Civic networks, on the other hand, can fill in the blanks in the administration, at least for a while. Societal endurance is thus a political resource that is renewed, but can be exhausted, which is part of the institutional fabric and of reciprocal expectations.

4.4 Comparative Synthesis: Endurance as a Trinity, Not a Stockpile

The overall findings indicate that material and psychological causes are inadequate. Russia is larger scale and has a more independent military industry, but to maintain a war requires extensive militarisation, no buffers and frequent replacement at quality prices. Ukraine lacks resources, but adds them by coalitions, civic mobilisation, and commercial defence ecosystem with battlefield users. Both of the configurations have yielded endurance; each also possesses a different pathway to brittleness.

The deeper trinity of Clausewitz explains the interaction. Policy in war aims, budgets and alliances; chance in the battlefield, technological surprise and learning; passion in recruitment, volunteering, fear, sacrifice and fatigue. The tendencies are not a clean fit with organisations. Military adaptation and policy resources increase through Ukrainian civilian engineers, while Russian fiscal incentives transform state capacity into recruitment

and Ukraine's European governments expand its policy resources. It is this movement that makes the trinity 'remarkable' for its quality: the vertices are constantly reshaped as the war evolves.

Strategic endurance is therefore NOT additive, but competitive and coupled. Russia might attempt to outlast Ukraine's coalition strength and demographic limitations, while Ukraine might attempt to make Russian costs add up more rapidly than Moscow will be able to translate scale into tolerable results. When one vertex is weak, the other vertices are required to do more, and the other way around: when there are not enough people, technological and fiscal requirements go up, when the money is low, recruitment is harder and so on. Cross-vertex substitution is one factor that may account for the longevity of both states beyond the single-variable predictions, but the SETF poses that substitution will be increasingly costly.

Domain	Russia	Ukraine	Strategic implication
Government	Larger autonomous resource base; centralised fiscal-industrial mobilisation.	Extreme domestic military burden; external finance and arms expand effective capacity.	Endurance depends on resource conversion and predictability, not GDP alone.
Armed forces	Scale, replacement and growing UAV-fires integration; force-quality trade-offs.	Distributed innovation, commercial procurement and digital feedback; manpower constraints.	Regeneration rate and learning determine whether attrition is sustainable.
Society	High declared military support coexists with majority preference for negotiations.	Strong civic mobilisation and defence legitimacy coexist with measurable fatigue.	Support is multidimensional; negotiation preference is not identical to collapse.

Table 1. Comparative mechanisms of strategic endurance

Comparative Trinity Pathways to Strategic Endurance

RUSSIA

UKRAINE

Government	Centralised fiscal-industrial mobilisation; large autonomous resource base; shrinking buffers and labour constraints	Coalition diplomacy + domestic mobilisation; external finance/weapons as state capacity; very high fiscal burden
Armed forces	Scale, replacement and learning-industrial integration; persistent pressure but quality and equipment costs	Fast commercial innovation, digitisation and drone adaptation; coalition interoperability; manpower and rotation constraints
Society	High declared military support coexists with majority preference for negotiations; endurance increasingly routinised	Strong volunteer networks and defence legitimacy visible fatigue and declining "as long as necessary" endurance measure

Strategic endurance persists while the three vertices remain sufficiently aligned; substitution across vertices has limits.

Figure 5. Comparative trinity pathways to strategic endurance

Source: Author's synthesis of findings in Sections 4.1-4.3.

The institutional structures through which Russia and Ukraine sustain the war are in comparison in Figure 5. Russia's is rather state-centred - based on centralised fiscal-industrial mobilisation, autonomous scale, repeated military replacement. Ukraine's is more networked, a mix of domestic government action and external support, commercial innovation and civic participation. What is significant is not which diagram is the 'stronger' one but where each is stressing. The bottom rule reflects the essence of the SETF's findings: So long as the vertices are at least reasonably aligned, endurance will remain in place; after a time of substituting for a weak connection, however, costs will increase and will eventually hit limits.

The synthesis provides a more exact answer, one that is more precise than 'Russia's resources are more' or 'Ukraine's motivation is more'. The problem with Russian scale is it can be used for production, recruitment and pressure, which eats up fiscal and human buffers. Legitimate and innovative Ukrainian identity is of significance because it can help mobilise civic effort and external support, but it cannot overcome demographic limitations or coalition dependency. The long run variable is the capacity of each trinity to reproduce the inputs that are required by the other vertices without a strain becoming a system-wide break.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This research focused on the influence of government, military and society on Russian and Ukrainian strategic endurance between February 2022 and 8 August 2026. The propositions were supported with qualifications. Governments continue to exist because they balance war ends with fiscal, industrial, administrative and diplomatic resources; armed forces continue to exist because they replenish ammunition, weapons and the ability to fight through learning and replacement; societies continue to exist because they maintain their involvement in the conflict and an acceptable percentage of burden even as their fatigue increases. They are not individual reservoirs. They are a coupled system with each vertex providing and limiting the others.

The endurance systems of Russia and Ukraine have developed separately. Russia's is more state-centric, independent, based on centralised mobilization, scale and military learning in institutions, and in decline of its buffers and force-quality choices. Ukraine's is more networked and based on defensive legitimacy, coalition support, distributed innovation and civic participation, but on the other hand, extreme military burden, destruction, manpower scarcity and external dependency. Endurance is Clausewitz, because it is the ongoing performance of the alignment of the political purpose, military chance and social passion under friction.

5.2 Research Limitations

The primary evidence is secondary, and open source, created in the midst of a war. The use of strategic communication, fiscal estimates can be amended, and military adaptation is partly hidden. Given the sensitivity to sampling, wording and political environment, it is important to note that the results of KIIS and Levada are not analysed as equivalent measures of freely expressed preference, but rather in their own contexts. The photographs in Figure 4 depict civilian mobilisation, and are not able to determine prevalence. The research does not attempt to estimate casualty ratios or predict victory, but rather mechanisms and pathways of stress.

5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Study

Future studies should follow up on the individual data that has been connected longitudinally with recruitment, defence production, aid, fiscal pressure, trust, volunteering and battlefield adaptation. It should differentiate between replacement quantity and quality, declared support and willingness to sacrifice. Use of the SETF in other long interstate wars may provide tests to determine if other substitution limits occur. Interviews with soldiers, civil society organisers, industrial managers, donors and policy officials would also shed light on the implementation of cross-vertex compensation and when a 'bottleneck' becomes a 'no-go'.

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