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Ukraine in a "War of Attrition": The Warfare Paradigm Shift

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"*The experience shows that it is not victories that teach a nation, but rather defeats that most often become sources of reflection capable of leading a leader and people onto a new victorious path…*"
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The "war of attrition" – is a catastrophe for both sides. Firstly – it means constant losses of personnel and civilian population; secondly – it results in the destruction of infrastructure and irreversible consequences for the economy and the environment; thirdly – it is a deadlock that bleeds both countries involved in the conflict and becomes the first step towards their decline for many years. Yet if a peace agreement is impossible, then for the country losing territory – such a path is better than capitulation…

Abstract. The contemporary war launched by the russian federation against Ukraine demonstrates a fundamental change in the nature of armed confrontation. This conflict is gradually moving beyond classical conceptions of war as a set of active combat actions, frontline clashes, and rapid operations. Instead, Ukraine has encountered a phenomenon that exhibits all the features of a so-called "war of attrition" – a protracted, gradual, fragmented yet systemic confrontation that causes destructive impact not only on the frontline but also in the rear, in the information space, economy,

energy sector, international diplomacy, and in the public consciousness. Therefore, the main aim of the article is to explore “war of attrition” as a phenomenon and to introduce this concept into scientific, strategic, and public discourse, as it reflects the new realities of Ukraine’s military experience that no longer fit within traditional frameworks. The main results of the article are as follows: an analysis of the military confrontation in the context of the russian-Ukrainian war is conducted in order to examine the phenomenon of a slow, incremental advance that lacks a clearly defined frontline breakthrough but is instead characterised by months-long pressure and attrition of the enemy; a conceptual and terminological justification and a definition of the philosophical concept of “war of attrition” are provided; the main principles of conducting a “war of attrition” are defined; the main characteristics of “war of attrition” are outlined; the periods of transformation of the russian-Ukrainian war into a “war of attrition” are established; possible projected consequences of “war of attrition” for russia and Ukraine are identified; the system of external and internal factors that may push russia to shift from “war of attrition” to active operations is revealed; numerical indicators of “war of attrition” based on the russian-Ukrainian experience are defined; and the foundations of the Concept of “war of attrition” are elaborated using the russian-Ukrainian conflict as an example. The materials of the article may be useful to military theorists and practitioners involved in developing strategies for contemporary warfare; security and defence analysts studying the transformation of armed conflicts; researchers in the field of the philosophy of war, military history, and international relations; as well as policymakers and military leaders who shape defence policy and military doctrines.

Keywords: hybrid war, military operations, military security, armed struggle, philosophy of war, military strategy, politico-military logic, strategic thinking, military leadership, technologies of war, tactics and strategy of military operations, cyber weapons, “war of attrition”, national security, global stability, methods of warfare, transformation of the armed conflicts, set of indicators (characteristics) of the “war of attrition”, forms of the armed conflict, forms of the military operations.

Introduction

The contemporary war unleashed by the russian federation against Ukraine demonstrates a fundamental change in the nature of armed confrontation [1–5]. This conflict is gradually going beyond the classical understanding of war as a set of active combat operations, front-line clashes, and swift campaigns. Instead, Ukraine is facing a phenomenon that bears all the hallmarks of the so-called “war of attrition” – a protracted, gradual, fragmented, yet systemic confrontation that exerts a destructive impact not only on the front lines but also in the rear, in the information domain, the economy, energy sector, international diplomacy, and within the consciousness of society [1–12].

The term “war of attrition” is necessary for an adequate description of this phenomenon, as it more accurately than classical categories captures its main features: the uneven pace of combat operations, situational intensification in specific directions, informational and psychological pressure, energy and logistical blackmail, and a prolonged, exhausting campaign aimed at gradually undermining the national resilience of the adversary. The nominal “stability” of the front conceals a constant and intense struggle unfolding across multiple domains, and changes in the front line are no longer the sole measure of success or defeat.

The introduction of this term is not only conceptually justified but also philosophically grounded, as it enables a rethinking of war as a prolonged process with altered logic of time, space, and action. “War of attrition” is not merely a method, but a state. It blurs the line between peace and war, dissolves the front into the depths of the rear, stretches the notion of the beginning and end of conflict. Such a war demands not so much heroic breakthroughs, but intellectual, moral, technological, and mental resilience. It is a new paradigm in which victory lies not only in seizing positions, but in preserving will, integrity, and the capacity to adapt and evolve.

Thus, the necessity to study "war of attrition" as a phenomenon and to introduce this concept into academic, strategic, and public discourse is driven by the new realities of Ukraine's wartime experience, which do not fit within traditional frameworks. This opens up prospects for rethinking military strategy, updating defence doctrine, adapting social psychology, and shaping a new culture of resilience in response to the challenges of the 21st century.

Materials and Methods

In contemporary analysis of military confrontation, particularly in the context of the russo-Ukrainian war, increasing attention is being paid to the phenomenon of a slow, gradual advance that lacks a clearly defined front-line breakthrough but is instead characterised by months-long pressure and attrition of the adversary [1–21].

American military analyst Austin Bay, in his columns, refers to this phenomenon as a "creeping war of aggression" or a "creeping offensive", using these terms to describe the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the subsequent escalation of the conflict in Donbas. The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) also consistently records "creeping offensive" or "creeping advances" as a characteristic strategy of russian forces – namely, slow, "millimetre-by-millimetre" advances aimed at tactical pressure and demoralisation.

At the same time, this term has not yet been established in Ukrainian academic discourse. None of the authoritative scholarly sources provides a definition of "war of attrition", which gives reason to consider the term "war of attrition" as authorial. Its meaning is not only purely military but also deeply philosophical and requires corresponding reflection. In particular, the following conceptual definitions are possible:

"slow erosion of the adversary" – a war waged through the gradual exhaustion of the adversary's will, resources, and mental resilience without large-scale assaults, relying on multidimensional strategies of ideological, economic, and hybrid pressure;

"temporally-processual conflict" – a form of warfare that exists as a protracted socio-political process in time, where the clear boundary between war and peace, front and rear, the beginning and end of combat operations disappears;

"hybrid-philosophical experience" – a metaphysical condition of society in a state of prolonged uncertainty, where war becomes a constant backdrop to existence, in which the civilian and the military coexist in a "bizarre entanglement".

The phenomenon of "war of attrition" as a contemporary form of armed conflict—manifested in a prolonged, gradual, and multidimensional offensive without an official declaration of war or full-scale offensive operations—still lacks a recognised scientific definition and thorough theoretical reflection in both Ukrainian and international discourse. The formulation of such concepts as "slow erosion of the adversary," "temporally procedural conflict," and "hybrid-philosophical experience" allows for a perception of war not merely as a set of combat actions, but as a condition of societal existence, a tool of systemic exhaustion of the adversary, and a long-term process of blurring the boundaries between war and peace.

Under the conditions of the russian-Ukrainian war, this form of confrontation has become a reality that requires a new theoretical toolkit for analysis, forecasting, and the development of an adequate national resistance strategy. Therefore, the theoretical study of "war of attrition" is relevant not only for military science, but also for philosophy, political science, and security studies.

Results

"War of attrition" is a strategy of prolonged, gradual offensive that combines local combat operations, information and psychological pressure, economic exhaustion, and hybrid aggression with the aim of undermining Ukraine's resilience as a state without declaring a general assault or launching total mobilisation.

This phenomenon integrates the concept of a "creeping offensive," as documented by analysts from the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), who describe it as a systematic, "millimetre-by-millimetre" advance of russian forces — "creeping advances." At the same time, it encompasses key elements of hybrid warfare according to the "Gerasimov doctrine," primarily the influence on public consciousness, the use of non-military means of warfare, information terror, and the erosion of the moral resilience of the civilian population.

In this context, "war of attrition" captures a new paradigm of contemporary conflict, within which russia abandons the strategy of a blitzkrieg in favour of a prolonged, multi-vector and multi-layered attack—a state of chronic hybrid aggression in which the line between war and peace, front and rear, civilian and military is blurred.

The advantages of using the term "war of attrition" are evident:

- the term clearly conveys the nature of the current confrontation — multi-level, fragmented, without a classical front or large-scale invasion;
- its conceptual strength lies in highlighting the philosophical essence of the conflict — war as a protracted, chronic condition, where "peace" is merely the illusion of a pause;
- the analytical value of the term is that it enables a systematic description of the kremlin's strategy, which is based not on rapid breakthroughs, but on the slow attrition of the adversary — militarily, mentally, economically, and socially.

That is, the term "war of attrition" is new, but timely and necessary for the contemporary military-political and academic discourse.

The philosophical concept of this term shows that "war of attrition" is perceived as a state, a process, a metaphysical presence in daily life, but the core understanding of the term is determined by the Ukrainian context—specifically, it describes russia's new strategy against Ukraine, which is based on technologies of slow displacement, attrition, and hybrid aggression that combines classical and non-classical methods of warfare.

The main principles of conducting a "war of attrition" are:

- gradual advancement without a frontal breakthrough – territorial gains or pressure are applied step by step, without a large-scale offensive, through constant probing for weak spots;
- maintaining ambiguity and controlling intensity – the intensity of hostilities fluctuates in waves, making it impossible to clearly predict phases of escalation or "ceasefire";
- multi-dimensional impact (war on all fronts) – warfare is conducted not only physically, but also across the following domains: the information domain (disinformation, psychological operations), the energy domain (attacks on infrastructure), cyberspace, and the diplomatic arena (toxic international pressure);
- attrition rather than destruction – the objective is not the rapid elimination of the enemy, but the gradual weakening of their defence capability, economy, morale, and societal resilience;
- blurring the line between peace and war – there is no clearly defined frontline; the "war" appears to be ongoing, yet it is not officially declared, nor is it universally recognised as such (a hybrid and legitimised war);
- adaptability of tactics and scenarios – that is, the constant alteration of methods of action, forms of influence, and the manoeuvring of resources and tempo.

Table 1 describes the characteristics of a "war of attrition", that is, it defines the features that distinguish it from other types of war and from war in general. In particular, these include: the gradual, protracted, and barely perceptible nature of changes along the frontline; the absence of large-scale offensive operations; the dominance of attrition tactics; the extensive use of asymmetric actions; as well as its psychological impact on both society and the military, which leads to fatigue, a decline in mobilisation enthusiasm, and an adaptation to a protracted conflict as a "new normal" in the conduct of hostilities.

Table 1. Characteristics of a "war of attrition" (key distinctions)

Characteristic	"War of attrition"	Traditional war
Pace	Uneven, wave-like, protracted	High-intensity, staged
The front and rear boundary	Blurred, conditional	Clearly defined
Attack form	Partial offensives, psychological operations, drone attacks, terrorist acts, shelling	Large-scale combat clashes, artillery shelling, manoeuvre battles
Objective	Exhaustion, undermining resilience, psychological effect	Destruction or capitulation of the enemy
Tools	UAVs, cruise missiles, cyber weapons, psychological operations	Tanks, artillery, aviation, ground forces
Operation area	Entire territory of the state, rear, information domain	Primarily the combat zone
Legal status	May remain undeclared (hybrid)	Officially recognised war

The main types of weapons that contributed to the formation of a "war of attrition" within the russian-Ukrainian war include:

1. UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), which make it possible to conduct targeted, periodic strikes deep into the territory of the country without declaring an offensive.

2. Medium-range precision missiles, which make it possible to carry out pinpoint strikes on infrastructure from deep within the territory.

3. Cyberweapons and information technologies, namely: DDoS attacks, cyber espionage, phishing, blocking critical infrastructure facilities, operations based on open-source intelligence (OSINT).

4. EW systems and anti-drone technologies, which suppress control or conduct electronic warfare on the frontline and in the rear.

5. Mine warfare and remote mining, namely remote mining systems that make advancement impossible by creating "traps" without direct contact.

"War of attrition" is not merely a military strategy, but a new type of protracted conflict, in which the primary objective is to exhaust, demoralise, and internally weaken the adversary through a multi-layered assault — on the frontline, in the rear, within public consciousness, and in the global perception. Its emergence became possible due to the technological evolution of warfare (UAVs, EW, precision weapons), while its development was enabled by the blurring of the traditional logic of "war–peace".

Let us outline the main periods of transformation of the russian-Ukrainian war into a "war of attrition", clearly identifying the stages of the transition from a traditional to a protracted, multi-layered conflict of a new type.

Main periods of the transformation of the russian-Ukrainian war into a "war of attrition".

1. February strike and blitz containment (February – April 2022). The character of the war during this period: high-intensity, manoeuvre, classical war, that is, a war of full-scale invasion. The aim of the russian federation during this period was a blitzkrieg, a change of the political regime in Ukraine. During this period, the front was advancing rapidly, the attacks had a large-scale character, that is, the war did not yet have signs of being "creeping".

2. Stabilisation of the front and transition to positional warfare (May – October 2022). The character of the war during this period: the beginning of the transition to a "creeping" form, that is, the front stabilises in key directions (Donbas, South). The war enters a phase of attritional artillery fighting with constant counter-battery combat, and unmanned systems are actively developing. The main signs of "creeping" include: local offensives with small forces; assault actions; parallel use of unmanned systems, mortars, artillery; changing pace of hostilities and the beginning of the first phase

of protraction. During this period, the first features of a "war of attrition" are formed, namely: fragmentation, attrition, attacks on the rear and so on.

3. Mass attacks on the energy sector and critical infrastructure (October 2022 – March 2023). The character of the war during this period: the war moves beyond the line of contact (the front); russia launches systematic missile strikes on energy facilities; for the first time, Shahed-type UAVs are used and so on. The main signs of "creeping" during this period include: the beginning of energy blackmail; strikes deep inside Ukraine (Kyiv, Lviv, Vinnytsia); an attempt to create psychological fatigue in the population. The war becomes multi-dimensional, that is, this is the key moment of transition into a "war of attrition".

4. Operational stagnation and wave-like attacks (April – December 2023). The character of the war during this period: positional stagnation on the front; reduction of large-scale manoeuvres; instead, growth of local battles (Avdiivka, Bakhmut); russia changes its tactics to "creeping offensives" – 100–200 metres per week. The main signs of "creeping" during this period include: mass use of FPV drones, constant attacks on logistics, railways, ports, hydroelectric power stations, grain elevators. "War of attrition" becomes the dominant form of combat operations.

5. Systemic asymmetric phase of war (2024–2025 and ongoing). The character of the war: attritional phase, with a multi-layered strategy by russia, namely: pressure on the front; strikes on the rear; information campaigns. Ukraine switches to a regime of resource economy, asymmetry, innovation. The main signs of "creeping" during this period include: mass use of UAVs and FPVs as the main strike asset, no linear offensive, only so-called "nibbling" of positions, intensification of the elements of "war for the mind" (attacks on civilians, elections, black PR). "war of attrition" has become russia's strategy to exhaust Ukraine's statehood as a system.

The russian-Ukrainian war gradually transitioned into a "creeping" phase, with its culmination in 2022–2023 and the final consolidation of this type of conflict in 2024. This is not merely an adaptation to losses, but a deliberate strategy by the russian federation aimed at protracted pressure without major breakthroughs, yet with the accumulation of destructive effect.

We shall conduct a comparative analysis of the independent, potentially foreseeable consequences of the "war of attrition" for russia and Ukraine, focusing on political, military, social, and civilisational outcomes. This takes into account that a "war of attrition" is not a blitz-type conflict but a prolonged confrontation with multiple levels — from drones and deep strikes to impacts on the economy and identity.

Possible foreseeable consequences of the "war of attrition" for russia:

- military attrition under the illusion of progress, as the constant "gnawing" at new positions creates an impression of advancement but yields no strategic breakthrough. The military burden continues to grow, with increasing losses in personnel and equipment, alongside the gradual degradation of mobilisation resources;
- systemic internal exhaustion, marked by budget depletion due to prolonged war financing, escalating issues in healthcare, education, and regional governance, and the formation of a "war-dependent" economy functioning solely to sustain the conflict (military socialism);
- isolation and loss of international influence, as even without a formal defeat, russia is degrading as a major geopolitical actor — losing its grip over the post-Soviet space, while NATO, Turkey, and China strengthen their positions relative to the russian federation;
- moral and civilisational degradation, driven by a total immersion in the cult of war as a norm, and by the historical branding of russia as an aggressor.

A "war of attrition" will not lead to victory, but it may leave the russian federation as an isolationist, authoritarian state locked in a state of chronic "military stability".

Possible foreseeable consequences of the "war of attrition" for Ukraine:

- a rethinking of the nature of statehood, as under conditions of prolonged exhaustion, the very idea of the state transforms — from a "consumer state" to a "warrior state," where security, technology, self-organisation, and horizontal structures form the core;
- strengthening of asymmetric advantages: if Ukraine does not win a "grand battle," it may prevail in "a thousand small ones" through technologies (UAVs, AI, EW), digital defence, resilient democracy, and an ability to adapt faster than the russian federation;
- endurance as a new strength, since under "war of attrition" conditions, Ukraine builds national endurance — cultural, psychological, institutional. This makes a russian victory fundamentally impossible, as russia will not be able to break Ukrainian identity — even occupation would not guarantee control;
- a shift in global role, as the world gradually recognises that Ukraine is not only a victim of aggression but also a laboratory of new warfare, a model for Europe's future security. The experience of "war of attrition" shapes Ukraine as a post-heroic nation, where victory means to survive, to hold the line, to fight innovatively, and not to vanish.

If we consider the philosophical dilemma — who will prevail in a "creeping" war? — it may be said that russia seeks ultimate control, while Ukraine fights for endless resistance. Victory will not go to the one who occupies more ground, but to the one who can endure perpetual tension and remain true to themselves. A potential victory in a "creeping" war for russia is tactical advancement and holding parts of territory, while its potential "defeat" is a strategic loss of the future, isolation, and degradation.

For Ukraine, victory means survival, preservation of the nation, adaptation, and recognition by the world, while defeat would mean exhaustion, demographic losses, a resource crisis, and territorial loss — with the worst-case scenario being the loss of statehood. Despite the actual implementation of the "war of attrition" strategy, russia continuously nurtures hopes of returning to an active, large-scale offensive phase.

The main drivers behind the russian federation's desire to return to an active phase of the war are:

1. The military-political logic of the regime. The political regime in russia operates under the logic of "victory or death." A "war of attrition" does not generate a victorious narrative for the domestic audience. Without a "great victory," the Kremlin cannot legitimise the sacrifices, repressions, and militarisation of life.

2. Psychological incompatibility with positional warfare. russian strategic culture is based on dominance and offensive action, not on defence and patience. Strategically, russia is not prepared to exist in a "no man's war." putin's leadership believes that war must end with the "signing of a capitulation," not with a stabilised frontline.

3. A tool for pressuring the West. Active operations offer a new opportunity for ultimatum-based blackmail of the West through the threat of escalation. A return to full-scale war allows russia to dictate political terms, undermine Western unity, and fuel "Ukraine fatigue."

4. Fear of strategic exhaustion. A "war of attrition" is a war of endurance, which russia may ultimately lose due to technological degradation, reduction in the quality of personnel, and increasing economic, political, and other forms of isolation.

That is, an active operation is perceived as an attempt to break the current situation while the russian federation still has resources and while there remains a certain instability in the course of support for Ukraine in its struggle for freedom.

Let us outline the system of external and internal factors that may prompt russia to shift from a "creeping" war to active operations.

The main internal factors (within the russian federation) include:

- the political need for victory, as in the face of new domestic challenges (elections, social tensions), the Kremlin may use a large-scale offensive to mobilise the population and generate a sense

of “national uplift” in order to reduce war fatigue and define a horizon for its end, thus easing the restrictions that the war currently imposes on russian society;

- military lobbying, that is, the military leadership may push for an “offensive scenario” as a means of rehabilitating itself after the defeats of 2022–2024;
- growing chaos within the army, as under conditions of positional attrition, military ferment may arise both at the tactical and strategic levels, with generals seeking initiative through active operations.

The main external factors include:

- weakening of Western support for Ukraine, meaning that delays in aid or political shifts in the United States or the EU (e.g. Trump, right-wing parties) could offer russia a window of opportunity for a breakthrough;
- global crises, as if international attention is diverted (e.g. Taiwan, the Middle East, internal EU crises), russia may seize the moment to launch a large-scale offensive;
- successes of local offensives, as a tactical breakthrough on a specific section of the front (for example, in Kharkiv region or Donbas) could trigger the escalation of full-scale hostilities.

The conducted analysis demonstrates that russia does not perceive the “war of attrition” as a desirable state of the present, as it is forced to conduct it due to its inability to achieve a full-scale victory. Its strategic goal is to break out of the deadlock and resume assault—through the frontline, diplomacy, or information escalation—but it requires political, military, and economic support, which it is currently actively seeking by various means.

The West and Ukraine must clearly understand today that the “war of attrition” is only one phase of a protracted war, the end of which is not yet in sight, because russia never abandons the idea of a “great revanche” or a “Pyrrhic victory,” at least for its own population, in order to justify the consequences of the war both domestically and internationally.

Let us attempt to quantitatively characterise the phenomenon of the “war of attrition” using the example of the russian-Ukrainian conflict (Table 2) by identifying key numerical indicators that reflect the “creeping” nature of the war.

We shall outline the core meaning of the indicators that reflect the nature of the “war of attrition”.

The core essence of the indicators of the “war of attrition” – characteristics of protractedness, slowness, and attrition through repetitive actions rather than through strategic breakthroughs.

The presented set of indicators illustrates that military effect is measured not by cities, but by positions, trenches, forest strips, and metres. This is a war of resource survival, endurance, and adaptation rather than of rapid victories.

Let us outline the foundations of the “war of attrition” Concept based on the example of the russian-Ukrainian conflict, formulated as an analytical and philosophical generalisation of a new type of conflict under the conditions of the 21st century:

The “war of attrition” concept: the Ukrainian dimension.

A “war of attrition” – is a new form of armed confrontation characterised by a multi-level, prolonged, and gradual nature of hostilities and by its impact on the opposing state through a set of hybrid means: military, informational, economic, political, and psychological. It has no clearly defined beginning or predictable end, and its main goal is the exhaustion of resources, the will to resist, and the destruction of the internal cohesion of the target state.

The concept involves revealing the main distinctive features of a “war of attrition”, namely:

- the blurring of boundaries between war and peace (no formal declaration of war, periodic statements about negotiations or “freezing” the conflict);
- a shift in the frontline paradigm, meaning that the war is conducted both along the line of contact and in the rear – in the form of terror, drone attacks, explosions, and sabotage;

- attrition rather than seizure, that is, the aim is not territorial control but the demoralisation of the enemy;
- steady, slow aggression without a clear peak or turning point;
- a dominance of technology and manipulation over the mass use of force.

Table 2. Numerical characteristics (indicators) of the "war of attrition" based on the russian-Ukrainian experience

Indicator	Typical Value / Range	Explanation
1. Tempo of frontline advancement	50–300 metres per week (in active sectors)	Indicates an extremely slow pace of combat operations, without decisive breakthroughs. For example: russian advancement near Avdiivka in 2023–2024.
2. Number of artillery/mortar strikes per km²/day	200–1,000+ rounds per day on specific sections of the front	Typical of positional pressure without a shift to manoeuvre warfare.
3. Share of unmanned strikes in total fire damage	40–70% (as of 2024–2025)	The shift to remote strikes is the foundation of the "war of attrition".
4. Average casualty rate of both sides (per day)	600–1,000 personnel per day in total (killed / wounded on both sides)	Large-scale losses without decisive changes on the combat map. This is typical of exhausting "creeping" phases of war.
5. Percentage of days with active combat operations during the year	85–95%	Constant combat activity without a defined "offensive" or "ceasefire" phase.
6. Number of attacks by unmanned systems on rear infrastructure (per month)	100–300+ attacks	Part of an asymmetric war of attrition that has become the norm.
7. Distance the frontline shifts in 6 months	1–5 km of total advance along specific directions	Compared to classical offensives – this is a war "for tree lines", not for strategic centres.
8. Percentage of mobilised personnel within the forces (compared to regular troops)	50–70% in russian armed Forces, 40–60% in Ukrainian Armed Forces	"War of attrition" requires constant replenishment of manpower, which is a sign of a protracted conflict.
9. Dynamics of combat losses per 1 km of frontline (annual indicator)	2,000–5,000 personnel/km/year (in the hottest sectors)	One of the highest loss rates in wars since World War II – without strategic outcome.
10. Share of battles for small settlements (up to 5,000 residents)	80–90% of all offensive actions	"War of attrition" is focused on local battles rather than assaults on cities or regions.

The main weapons of a "war of attrition" (as seen in the russian-Ukrainian war example) are:

- FPV drones, UAVs, and kamikaze drones (used daily on a massive scale in tactical mode), as well as long-range unmanned strike systems (for strategic attacks);
- "minimal advancement" artillery, meaning the destruction of fortifications followed by the occupation of positions within a few hundred metres;
- EW systems, cyberattacks, and operations in the electromagnetic spectrum;
- mass fake narratives and disinformation campaigns (including through media and social networks);
- gas and energy weapons (especially in 2022).

The stages of the formation of "war of attrition" in the russian-Ukrainian conflict within the framework of the Concept are outlined in Table 3.

The goals of the "war of attrition" of the russian federation against Ukraine are: to exhaust material and human resources; to demoralise the civilian population (through drone terror and shelling); to weaken European and American support for Ukraine; to destabilise political stability; to delay time until a more favourable international situation.

Table 3. Stages in the formation of the "war of attrition" in the russian-Ukrainian conflict within the framework of the Concept

Period	Stage	Characteristic
2014–2015	Hybrid infiltration	Annexation of Crimea, appearance of "little green men", war in Donbas
2016–2021	Latent continuation of the war	Creation of pseudo-states, periodic shelling, diplomatic pressure
2022 (February – June)	Open phase, blitzkrieg	Mass invasion by the russian federation, attempt at rapid seizure of Kyiv
from summer 2022 – to present	Transition to the "war of attrition"	War of attrition, positional fighting, drone warfare, gradual advances, destruction of critical infrastructure

Forecast of the "war of attrition" consequences.

For Ukraine: if the resilience of the state is maintained – it is a chance for stabilisation and accumulation of advantage; if fatigue from the war occurs – it is a risk of gradual loss of control over the situation.

For the russian federation: if the tempo of the war is maintained – there is a possibility of sustaining pressure; if the war is excessively prolonged – it is a threat of internal explosion due to exhaustion.

The role of the "war of attrition" Concept for analysis and strategy. Understanding the "war of attrition" makes it possible to:

- adapt military strategy to the mode of "war of attrition";
- strengthen the internal resilience of the state;
- develop flexible, asymmetric responses;
- shift the narrative from "offensive-betrayal" to "management of prolonged struggle".

Recommendations

Understanding the essence of the "war of attrition", its goals, indicators, and consequences makes it possible to preliminarily formulate a number of recommendations for Ukraine regarding actions under the conditions of the ongoing "war of attrition", which may help to achieve a positive outcome in the long term, namely:

1. To create the conditions for constant strengthening of defensive resilience and the application of a strategy of positional flexibility. To develop deep multi-layered defence with maximum use of natural and artificial fortifications. To create opportunities for rapid deployment of mobile reserves in order to enable local counteroffensives and rapid regrouping in case of changes in the situation. It is necessary to constantly update the tactics of positional warfare through the use of contemporary innovative technologies (UAVs, EW, ESM, etc.).

2. To increase the intensity of the use of unmanned systems and long-range strike technologies against the enemy. To continue the development and implementation of UAVs for reconnaissance, fire correction, and precision strikes. It is necessary to focus on low-cost, high-precision enemy destruction systems that reduce risks for personnel, as well as on the development of networked fire control systems with rapid data exchange.

3. To pay attention to the support and development of human potential. To constantly adapt the system of mobilisation, training, and rotation of personnel in order to avoid burnout and preserve the functionality of human capital. To actively develop systems of psychological support, rehabilitation, and training of military specialists, as well as to implement measures for involving the public and volunteer movements in meeting the needs of the military (the needs of the front).

4. Strengthen intelligence and counterintelligence by employing both technical and human resources to timely detect threats and enemy manoeuvres. Work actively in the field of cybersecurity and the protection of the information space. Apply "hybrid" intelligence methods, including human assets, cyber intelligence, and open-source intelligence.

5. Create conditions for the economic and infrastructural resilience of the state by protecting critical infrastructure from strikes (energy, transport, communications), developing alternative supply routes and ensuring rapid restoration of damaged facilities, as well as supporting the wartime economy, including through the attraction of international assistance.

6. Continuously conduct active information and psychological warfare by fostering national unity, raising morale, countering enemy disinformation and propaganda, and maintaining international solidarity through effective informational influence.

7. Constantly seek and exploit opportunities for local counteroffensives by enabling conditions for surprise strikes and the de-occupation of territories at favourable moments, maintaining initiative where possible in order to force the enemy to expend resources, and ensuring flexible logistics and support for such operations.

8. Given the current situation and actions of russia, Ukraine must prepare for a protracted war by developing a strategic plan for the next 3–5 years, taking into account resource-related, social and technological challenges; continuing to develop its defence-industrial complex and scientific research to maintain technological superiority over the adversary; and establishing a system of continuous modernisation of armaments and combat tactics.

The Ukrainian experience shows that a "war of attrition" is a marathon, not a sprint. Ukraine must adopt a comprehensive approach that combines defensive endurance, technological innovation, human capital, and informational resilience. Only systemic and consistent efforts in all these areas will make it possible not only to withstand the "creeping" pressure but also to achieve strategic advantage in the long term.

Conclusion

The analysis of the concept of "war of attrition" in the context of the ongoing russian-Ukrainian conflict reveals significant shifts in the paradigm of warfare, reflecting the transformation of traditional military approaches towards a prolonged, gradual, and covert confrontation. The introduction of this term enables a deeper understanding of the nature of the current confrontation, which combines elements of hybrid warfare, informational pressure, economic constraints, and continuous local military actions.

The philosophical aspect of "war of attrition" presents it as a form of struggle that does not aim for a swift resolution but focuses on the gradual attrition of the enemy while simultaneously maintaining or expanding control over territories.

For Ukraine, understanding and adapting to the challenges of "war of attrition" is essential for ensuring long-term national security, upholding sovereignty, and preserving territorial integrity. A comprehensive strategy that integrates technological innovation, enhanced defence, information operations, and socio-psychological resilience can provide a pathway to a positive outcome in this prolonged confrontation.

Key prospects for further research within the scope of the article include:

- in-depth exploration of tactical and strategic models of "war of attrition" using examples from both contemporary and historical conflicts;
- development of a methodology for quantitative assessment of the effectiveness of countermeasures against "creeping war," taking into account technological, informational, and social factors;
- analysis of the role of unmanned systems, cyber operations, and information warfare as integral "war of attrition" components in the context of future military conflicts;

- examination of the impact of "war of attrition" on the civilian population, economy, and the psychological state of society, along with the development of recommendations to minimise negative consequences;
- integration of philosophical concepts and military theory to form new doctrines and strategies in response to the transformation of warfare under the conditions of "creeping" conflicts.

Overall, the topic of "war of attrition" remains highly relevant and promising for interdisciplinary research, which can contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary challenges and to the development of effective tools for addressing them.

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Україна в умовах "повзучої війни": зміна парадигми ведення воєнних дій

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"*Досвід показує, що націю навчають не перемоги, а найчастіше програші стають джерелами думок, які спроможні вивести лідера та народ на новий переможний шлях…*"
Олег Семененко

"Повзуча війна" – є катастрофою для обох сторін. По-перше – це постійні втрати особового складу та цивільного населення; по-друге – це знищення інфраструктури та безповоротні наслідки для економіки й екології; по-третє – це патова ситуація, яка знекровлює обидві країни учасників конфлікту та є першим кроком до їхнього занепаду на довгі роки. Але якщо мирна угода неможлива, тоді для країни, яка втрачає території, – такий шлях краще, ніж капітуляція…

Анотація. Сучасна війна, розв'язана російською федерацією проти України, демонструє докорінну зміну характеру збройного протистояння. Цей конфлікт поступово виходить за межі

класичних уявлень про війну як про сукупність активних бойових дій, фронтових зіткнень і швидких операцій. Натомість Україна стикнулася з явищем, що має всі ознаки так званої “повзучої війни” – затяжного, поступового, фрагментарного, але системного протистояння, яке несе руйнівний вплив як на фронті, так і в тилу, в інформаційному просторі, економіці, енергетиці, міжнародній дипломатії та в свідомості суспільства. Отже, головною метою статті є дослідження “повзучої війни” як феномену та впровадження цього поняття в науковий, стратегічний і суспільний дискурс, що зумовлено новими реаліями українського воєнного досвіду, який не вкладається в традиційні рамки. Основними результатами статті є те, що в ній: проведено аналіз воєнного протистояння в контексті російсько-української війни для дослідження феномену повільного, поступового наступу, що не має чітко окресленого фронтового прориву, але натомість характеризується багатомісячним тиском і виснаженням супротивника; здійснено понятійно-термінологічне обґрунтування та визначення філософського концепту “повзуча війна”; визначено основні принципи ведення “повзучої війни”; визначено основні **х**арактеристики “повзучої війни”; сформовано періоди трансформації російсько-української війни у “повзучу війну”; визначено можливі прогнозовані наслідки “повзучої війн” для росії та України; розкрито систему зовнішніх та внутрішніх факторів, які можуть спонукати росію до переходу від “повзучої” війни до активних дій; визначено числові характеристики (показники) “повзучої війни” на основі російсько-українського досвіду; розкрито основи Концепції “повзучої війни” на прикладі російсько-українського конфлікту. Матеріали статті можуть бути корисними військовим теоретикам та практикам, які займаються розробленням стратегій сучасного ведення війни; аналітикам у сфері безпеки та оборони, які досліджують трансформацію збройних конфліктів; дослідникам у галузі формування філософії війни, військової історії та міжнародних відносин; політикам і військовим керівникам, які формують оборонну політику та військові доктрини.

Ключові слова: гібридна війна, воєнні дії, воєнна безпека, збройна боротьба, філософія війни, військова стратегія, воєнно-політична логіка, стратегічне мислення, воєнне лідерство, технології війни, тактика та стратегія воєнних дій, кіберзброя, “повзуча війна”, національна безпека, глобальна стабільність, методи ведення війни, трансформація збройних конфліктів, сукупність показників (характеристик) “повзучої війни”, форми збройного конфлікту, форми воєнних дій.