

Conclusion

To conclude, measuring the balance of conventional forces along the Central Front is a complex and uncertain task. Aggregate force comparisons conceal many assumptions critical to the appreciation of the balance as portrayed by the analyst. For instance, ominous portrayals of overwhelming Warsaw Pact conventional superiority may reflect pessimistic judgements of NATO responsiveness to indicators of Warsaw Pact mobilization, out-theatre demands on American military forces, and/or the reliability of allied forces. Alternatively, more sanguine appreciations of these factors may lead to less threatening assessments of the balance. In the end, numerical estimates of the balance are only reflections of the qualitative assumptions underlying them.

Moreover, these comparisons present only part of the picture. Many other factors, while difficult to quantify, also bear directly on battlefield terrain, and the inherent advantages and disadvantages of offence and defence, are but a few of the qualitative factors essential to a fuller understanding of the conventional force balance between East and West.