

- the throw-weight of the missile
- the hardness of the target
- the reliability of the delivery system.

In addition to these factors, which are addressed in this paper, there are a number of other variables which are not easily quantified, but are critical to calculations of the force balance. These include the readiness of operational forces, the survivability of command and control centres, the time between launch and target of a delivery system, the ability of offensive weapons to penetrate defences, and defence capabilities. Allowing for these factors generally involves devising complicated scenarios, which are themselves the subject of considerable debate regarding their real-life plausibility. This paper does not address these factors, important though they are, but deals only with the quantifiable variables identified above which provide the most basic aids to an understanding of the strategic debate. Used in combination and in a step-by-step process they can provide useful keys to understanding the superpower competition in nuclear weapons.

Tables 1A and 1B use standard counts of missiles and warheads. The figures cited in the Tables are based on information derived from a variety of sources. Where this information is compatible with the Military Balance, the figures are used without notation, and the Military Balance may be used for reference. Where there are significant differences with the Military Balance, the differences are noted and the actual source used is cited. Where the information was not available in the Military Balance, the source used is cited. Although the indicators used in Tables 1A and 1B are generally familiar, it may still be useful to define the exact meaning of the terms used.

Missiles/Warheads

The number of missiles and warheads possessed by each side are the basic counting variables, sometimes referred to as static indicators. A 'missile' is the actual vehicle launched. Some missiles carry multiple