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Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict

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The colossal impact of nuclear weapons on the Cold War strategic decision making has resulted in a incredible amount of literature on superpowers' nuclear strategy (cf. Schelling 1960; Freedman 1986, 2003; Glaser 1990). The literature is focussed on the posture, force structure and communications and control mechanisms adopted by the superpowers and their effect on the degree of deterrence between them (Eden & Miller 1989; Mearshiemer 1985; Jervis 1989). This has led to a generalisation of the superpowers' Cold War nuclear experience and an analysis of the other nuclear powers' arsenal is made through the conceptual and theoretical categories offered by such literature.

This is problematic for three key reasons. First, an overwhelming majority of the modern nuclear weapon states are regional powers with limited resources and specific security interests often confined to their respective regions and have adopted starkly different nuclear strategies to address their unique strategic imperatives. These diverse strategies cannot be adequately explained by the lexicon borrowed from the Cold War experience of the two superpowers.

Second, the policy expectations generated by the analysis purported by such literature regarding the pace and posture of regional nuclear powers have generally proven to be incorrect. Not only have such powers shown a remarkable diversity in their nuclear postures, the size of their arsenal has also been comparatively much lower. For example, In spite of facing a colossal nuclear arsenal of two superpowers, China maintained a small inventory of nuclear

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