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### **History of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Doctrine and a Path Forward**

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During the Cold War, the United States considered a number of approaches for living in a world with nuclear weapons, including disarmament, preventive war, the incorporation of nuclear weapons into military strategy, passive and active defense, and deterrence. With the failure of early approaches to disarmament, and the rejection of preventive war against the Soviet Union (and later, China), deterrence became central to key nuclear relationships, though arms control continued to play an important role. The nuclear nonproliferation treaty made preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons another central component of U.S. policy. The Bush Administration has tried to devise a new policy for the post-Cold War period. Their approach has three salient pillars. First, it is characterized by an overall skepticism toward multilateral agreements, on the grounds that bad actors will not obey them, that agreements can lead to a false sense of security, and that such agreements are too often a way for the Lilliputians of the world to tie down Gulliver. The March 2005 U.S. National Defense Strategy declared that U.S. strength “will continue to be challenged by those who employ a strategy of the weak, using international fora, judicial processes and terrorism.” Second, the Bush Administration declared its intention to maintain a military dominance so great that other states simply would not try to catch up. The 2002 National Security Strategy states that “Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States.” Third, the 2002 National Security Strategy (reaffirmed by the 2006 National Security Strategy) moved preventive war (which the strategies called “preemptive war”) to a central position, rather than deterrence and nonproliferation. In part this was because of the claim that certain “rogue” states, and terrorist groups, were not deterrable. This talk will sketch this history, discuss the approach of the Bush Administration in more detail and assess its successes and failures, and suggest the lines of a new approach to U.S. nuclear weapons policy for the coming decades. This approach will follow that outlined in George Bunn and Christopher Chyba (eds.), “U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy: Confronting Today’s Threats” (Brookings, 2006, 340 pp.).