

Sample Questions for the Comprehensive Examination

Students who opt to take the non-thesis comprehensive exam should understand that they may be asked a range of questions on a variety of issues covered during their academic pursuits at DSS, for example:

- Key authors and publications that influenced your studies at DSS;
- Theories explaining Waltz' analysis of why nations go to war;
- Theories of deterrence, including Schelling and Kahn;
- The basic parameters of the Just War Doctrine;
- The relationship between deterrence theory and U.S. Cold War arms control policy;
- Key emerging strategic challenges to U.S. and global security;
- U.S. approaches to counterproliferation, unilateral and multilateral;
- Evolving roles of intelligence and counterintelligence;
- Strategic culture of Islamic radicalism;
- Methods and prospects of counterterrorism.

Additionally, to establish students' proficiency in analysis and critical thinking, they may be asked to answer general questions on defense and strategic policy, for example:

- Having studied a range of issues at DSS, which issues do you believe are the most significant for US national security? What do you think are the biggest national security challenges facing the United States today? Do you think US policymakers are addressing these issues properly?
- What US national security policies, if any, would you change and why?
- Describe an issue you studied at DSS that led you to challenge your previous assumptions about the topic. Have your opinions changed as a result?
- What is your understanding of the relationship between "defense" and "national security"?
- How do you define "strategic" in the context of your studies at DSS?

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