CIS Manuscript Review
Guidelines/FAQs for scheduling and suggesting discussants

**Scheduling**
The CIS Director needs as much time as possible (ideally six months or more) to confirm senior discussants for a manuscript. The best way to finalize a date is for the author to think about a realistic but somewhat ambitious “hard deadline” by which the author can have a complete manuscript ready. Then we move one month further and schedule that date as the actual review. A month before the scheduled review is a “hard deadline” for the author to get the full manuscript to the CIS in order to send it to the discussants in plenty of time to read it carefully. Neither the author nor the CIS staff wish to insult the senior discussants by giving them too little time. In other words, if we choose a date on, say, February 22, the hard deadline for the author to have a complete draft manuscript to the CIS would be January 22 so that staff can send it out to the discussants and other participants who will attend the review. Thus, the author must choose a realistic date by which to complete a full draft. The review itself is a 3-hour session, usually 2-5 p.m., followed by dinner for all participants at a cool restaurant.

**Discussants**
In general, the manuscript is an author’s first, and thus, tenure, book. Therefore, the author needs it speak to as wide an audience as possible. In terms of discussants, *it does not benefit* the author to have two discussants from the same field, or who know either the book or the author too well. Rather, this is an important opportunity for the author to meet and impress two senior scholars who may review the book for a press, or who may write a tenure letter. This means that the choice of discussants should be strategic – there are some excellent scholars who are unlikely to review the book or write tenure letters, and in general they should be avoided unless there is a compelling reason not to. That is, the review is partly about helping the author market the book and the ideas and to increase the author’s visibility, in addition to getting help for the actual book. The list should include roughly half senior scholars who are directly in the author’s field, and roughly half who are in a “+ 1” field – a related field that is similar to but not directly the author’s field. It is important to have discussants from related fields – most books must speak to larger audiences, and certainly any tenure decision will include scholars
from related fields. For example, a book on nuclear deterrence might have a discussant who is a specialist IPE; or a book on Asian security might have a discussant who is conversant on alliances but not a regional expert.

With that in mind, the author and the CIS director together come up with a list of 5–6 scholars. The author first suggests to the director 5–6 names of scholars, and the director will then potentially add names as well. Half could be directly in the author’s field, but other half should be in related fields that will be important for the book. After all, a book will have to reach out to those “+1” fields in order to be publishable.

After the Director has finalized a list, the author is no longer involved. The CIS will contact the professors and go down the list until two discussants have been finalized. This not only protects the author from being “rejected,” it’s also quite a hassle and often senior discussants want to haggle over fees or dates, in which case it’s much easier to have a 3rd party (i.e., the director) do the negotiating and contacting, rather than the author.