

The background of the image is a large, circular seal of The Ohio State University, embossed on a dark brick pavement. The seal features a central shield with a book and a torch, surrounded by the text 'THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY' and 'DISCIPLINA'. At the top of the seal, it lists 'LETTERS', 'SCIENCE', 'ARTS', 'AGRICULTURE', and 'ENGINEERING'.

MERSHON CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES

Annual Report 2023-2024



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

MERSHON CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY STUDIES



From Our Director

In 2023-24, Mershon continued to integrate people and projects across our multidisciplinary, global engagements. We strengthened our active base of affiliates by organizing a variety of network-building inhouse events, including round-robin Mershon Mondays and get-to-know-the-faculty lunches for grad students. We also worked to build complementarity across research, public programming, and training activities, with a growing emphasis on the latter.

Highlights of this approach were the November 2023 National Security Simulation and the year-long Measuring Peace series. Mershon has become the permanent institutional host of the biennial "Sim," which brings Ohio State students into active problem-solving with professionals including prominent Washington journalists; retired generals, ambassadors, and congresspeople; federal lawyers; active military members; and Central Ohio business leaders over two days of intensive role play. This year we commissioned observers to assess learning and reviewed the planning process. In consequence we are templating Sim delivery, developing course tie-ins to deepen

student learning, instituting a scenario writing seminar, and deepening our dialogue with the Serious Games project at the University of Belgrade.

The "Measuring Peace" series highlighted Mershon's peacebuilding portfolio. It grew out of the previous year's Transitioning from Violence project (with a book now in press from the US Institute of Peace) and informed the design of the comparative post-agreement study launched in summer 2024 with Basque, Northern Ireland, and Colombian partners. Students participating in three sessions received a certificate. Students also benefited from the flourishing International History Workshop, the Quantum Social Science Bootcamp, the New Wave Realism conference, the Made By History partnership, the Mershon Africa Forum, and Mershon's new participation in the Department of State's Diplomacy Lab. The new Non-State Archive offers professional experience to PhD students while assisting global movements to catalogue and preserve their records.

Mershon's public programming engaged directly with current events. The Kruzel Lecture recruited Ivan Krastev to explain the relationship

demographics and democracy in recent European politics. Three events on the Gaza war addressed both international contexts and US domestic reactions. Global Ethics Day brought the Carnegie Council Doorstep Podcast to interview Ohio State students and faculty.

We funded research: over a quarter million dollars for 22 faculty and grad student projects, including ongoing initiatives such as the Comparative National Elections Project, the Indus Basin Water Project, Legal Geopolitics of the Ocean, Centering the Global Periphery, and VIEW (the Violence, Ideology, and Extremism Working Group). Edited volumes from the latter two groups are currently in production. Postdocs Brooks Marmon, Zaynab Quadri, and Sefa Secen published books or got contracts for them, and moved on to new positions as we recruited our next cohort.

We are grateful to all the affiliates, staff, partners, donors, and audiences who create the work of Mershon.

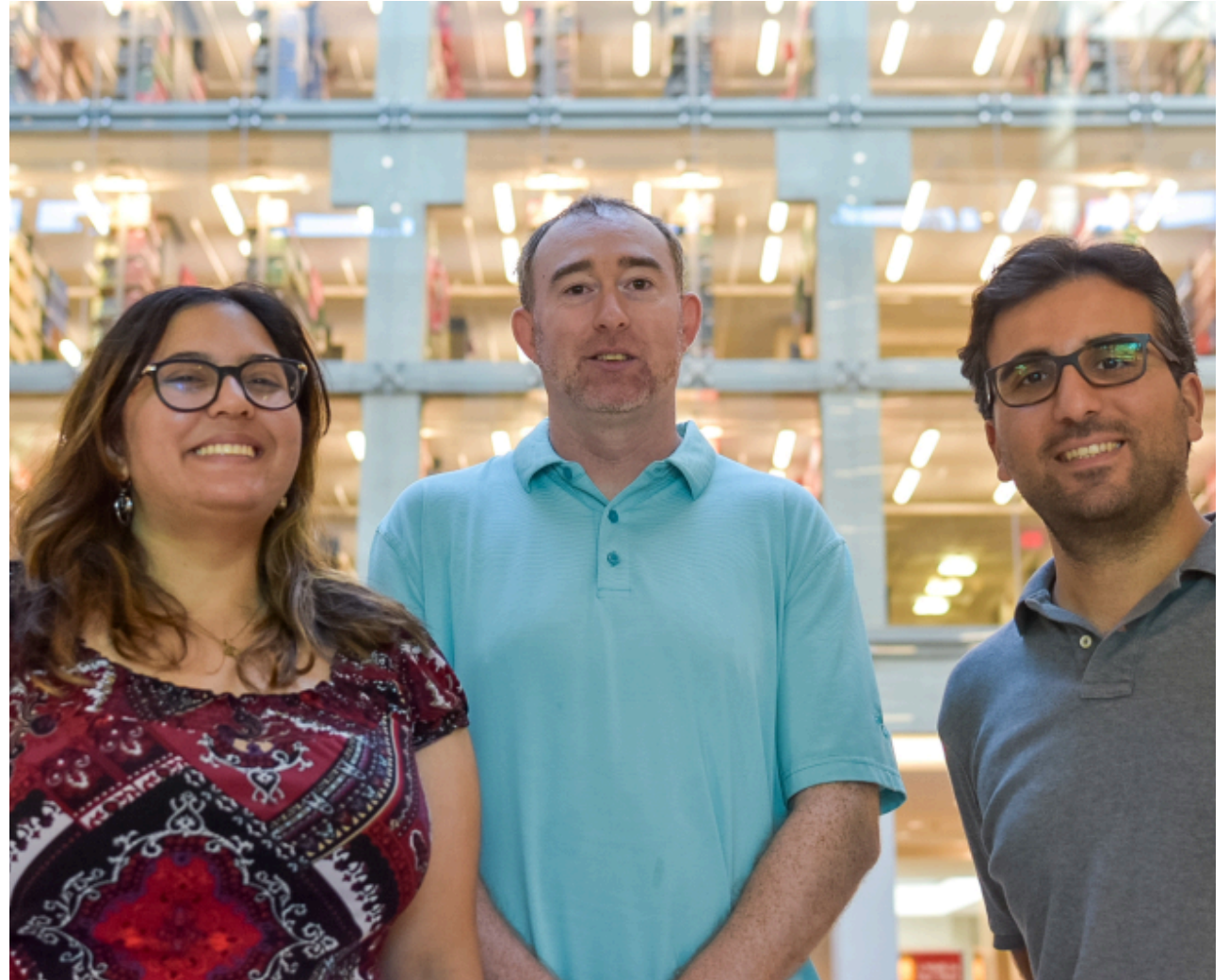
Dorothy Noyes
Director

Our People

The Mershon Center was made up of more than 100 affiliations including 16 senior faculty fellows, 44 faculty affiliates, 36 student affiliates, one visiting scholar, three post-doctoral researchers, and five staff members.

[Read more about our post-doctoral researchers.](#)

Our affiliates represented a diverse group of scholars who brought knowledge and expertise from four different Ohio State colleges and 16 departments within the College of Arts and Sciences.





Our Mission Statement

The Mershon Center studies the human and social dimensions of complex security challenges. Through research and engagement, we reframe the big issues while creating new models for ground-level problem-solving. By inviting multiple perspectives into conversation, we gain visibility into the human and social dimensions of security problems at all levels and cultivate the skillset for achieving solutions.

A world map with a light gray background. Several regions are highlighted in red, including parts of North America (USA and Canada), Europe (UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Scandinavia), and Australia. Other regions are highlighted in a lighter shade of red, including Mexico, Central America, South America, and parts of Asia and Africa. A semi-transparent gray box is overlaid on the map, containing text and a horizontal line.

Our Global Impact

The Mershon Center research, programs, and events engaged with scholars, thought leaders, policymakers, and government organizations across the globe. This year we cultivated collaborations with 66 educational institutions, 38 or 57% of which were international institutions representing 16 countries on five continents. We also worked with State agencies in Burundi, Colombia, Northern Ireland, and the United States.

[See the full list of our partners.](#)

Our Campus Impact

The Mershon Center worked with university community members across campus. We offered leadership, expertise, and support to 16 academic departments and 16 institutional centers this year.

[See the full list of our partners.](#)

Our partners came from across disciplines and reflect the thick connections between international, national, and human security challenges. Mershon convened faculty and students from fields involved analytically and/or practically with diplomacy, conflict, peacebuilding, governance, cooperative problem-solving, and related concerns. We fostered conversation with practitioners and policymakers.





Our Research

The Mershon Center supported faculty and student research through grant and scholarship opportunities and offered post-doctoral and visiting scholar appointments. We were home to ongoing research initiatives with unique goals and perspectives on security.

[See more details about our research.](#)

In 2023-2024, the Mershon Center awarded more than a quarter million dollars to fund 22 new research projects as well as nearly \$20,000 for student scholarship opportunities.



Our Events

As an interdisciplinary center, Mershon hosted events featuring renowned speakers from across campus and across the world. This past year, we presented 39 events ranging from the Quantum Social Science Bootcamp to a U.S. Department of Justice conference to a National Security Simulation. These events sparked conversations and garnered more than 1,777 attendees.

[See a list of 2023-2024 Mershon Center events](#)

Highlights



Kruzel Lecture

Ivan Krastev, chair, Centre for Liberal Strategies, gave a presentation entitled "Demography, Democracy and the Politics of the Last Man."



National Security Simulation

200 participants spent 2 days in role-play, reacting to realistic intelligence & media injects during this nationally unique student training platform.



Measuring Peace: Research Discussion Series

Researchers, practitioners, and policy specialists across disciplinary backgrounds explored the diverse and myriad ways in which peace is defined and studied.

Highlights



The Doorstep

Co-hosts Tatiana Serafin and Nikolas Gvosdev spoke with Mershoners live at Ohio State about “Competing Priorities and Generational Dynamics at the Doorstep.”



Successes and Challenges of Post-Cold War African Democracy

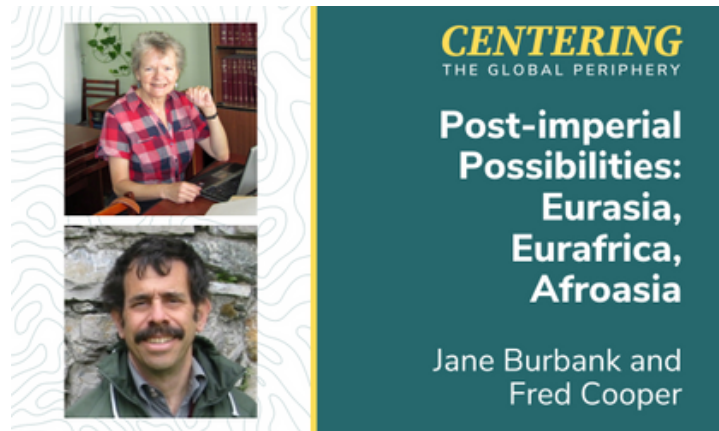
His Excellency John Mahama, the former and now reelected president of Ghana, delivered a lecture on the current status of democracy in Africa.



Embroidered Past, Imagined Future Opening Reception

Through embroidered observations with insightful readings of the violence in the Eastern Congo, this exhibition introduced the work of Lucie Kamuswekera.

Highlights



Centering the Global Periphery

This thematic area prioritized perspectives from allegedly peripheral state and non-state actors to foreground marginalized voices in global security.



Legal Geopolitics of the Ocean

Though the ocean is often misperceived as an outlaw space, these programs explored how states territorialize oceans as quasi-legal jurisdictions.



International History Seminar (IHS)

IHS created a cohesive, highly engaged community; to present high-level, cutting-edge work; and to explore new areas of research.

Highlights



Non-State Archive

This archive offers funding to support digital copies and finding aids for collections of documents, oral histories, and other media related to non-state actors.



Divided Community Project (DCP)

DCP provided dispute resolution and systems-design expertise to community and university leaders to enhance resiliency and prepare for and respond to events that polarize their communities.



Federalism, Cultural Identity and Insecurity in Nepal

The focus of research was to explore and better understand the dynamic intersection of cultural identity, insecurity, and federalism as a source of current ethnic and caste related conflict.

Highlights



Violence, Ideology, and Extremism Working Group (VIEW)

VIEW explored the multifaceted aspects of violence, ideology, and extremism across a wide range of disciplines.



Quantum Social Science Bootcamp

A first of its kind training, Bootcamp introduced students and scholars from across the social sciences to the potential utility of quantum theory.



New Wave Realism

This conference fostered a community of young realist scholars exploring new global and national developments through a lens of realist theories and concepts.

Thank you!

We are deeply grateful for the support and generosity of our donors. Your contributions have been instrumental in helping us achieve our mission and make a significant impact. Thank you for being a vital part of our community.

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