



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

MERSHON CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY STUDIES

2022-23 Annual Report



About the Mershon Center

The Mershon Center constructs holistic accounts of international security challenges so that they may be effectively addressed. By inviting multiple perspectives into conversation, we gain visibility into the human and social dimensions of security problems at all levels. We also cultivate the skillset for designing and implementing solutions.





From our Director

This year the Mershon Center welcomed two new staff members, three new postdocs, and a very new director into our space on the Oval, along with returning and first-time affiliates, including our new Hayes Chair. The challenge of intellectual exchange across specialties, stances, cultures, and generations was eased by the pleasure of coming back together in person. Fieldwork resumed, new training activities took shape, and new research collaborations were launched.

International, national, and human security are all at stake in the emerging complex problems. Mershon is leveraging its interdisciplinary tradition to rise to the occasion.

Affiliates by the Numbers

17

Senior Faculty Fellows

Departments represented: Political Science, Sociology, History, English, Philosophy, Law



35

Research Associates

Departments represented: African and African American Studies, Comparative Studies, English, Germanic, Geography, History, Law, Music, Near Eastern and South Asian, Political Science, Slavic and East European, Sociology, Theatre, Womens, Gender and Sexuality Studies



17

Graduate Student Affiliates

Departments represented: Political Science, History, Dance Studies, Art History, Environment and Natural Resources

Events and Publications

53

Mershon Events

16

Co-Sponsored

71

Articles Published

4

Books Written

Social Media Growth

Numbers from August 2022 to August 8, 2023

1,200%

Facebook Reach Growth

423

New Social
Media Followers

188k

Twitter Post Reach

4,817.5

YouTube Watch Hours

24.8k

YouTube Channel Views

+9,883

YouTube Views
vs. Last Year



Research and collaboration

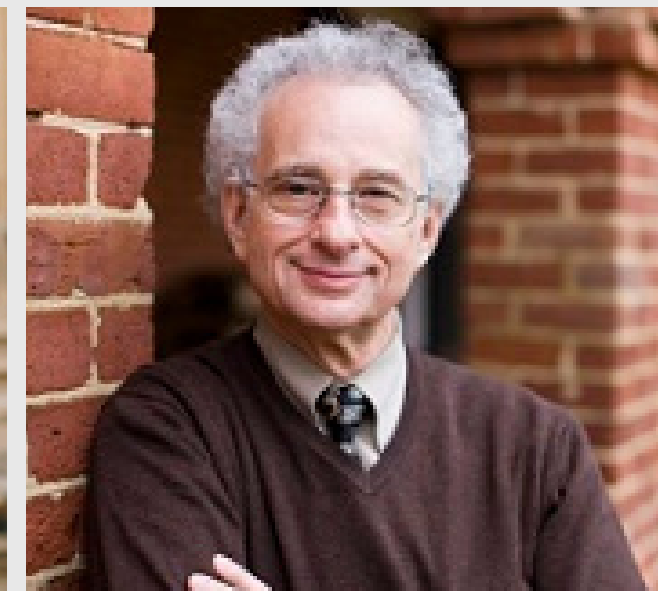
The Mershon Center's institutional partnerships create opportunities for its affiliates. In June, five professors and seven PhD students from Ohio State met with counterparts from the University of Belgrade for a summer school on "Serious Games and World Politics," a project of the Serbian Educational Alliance.

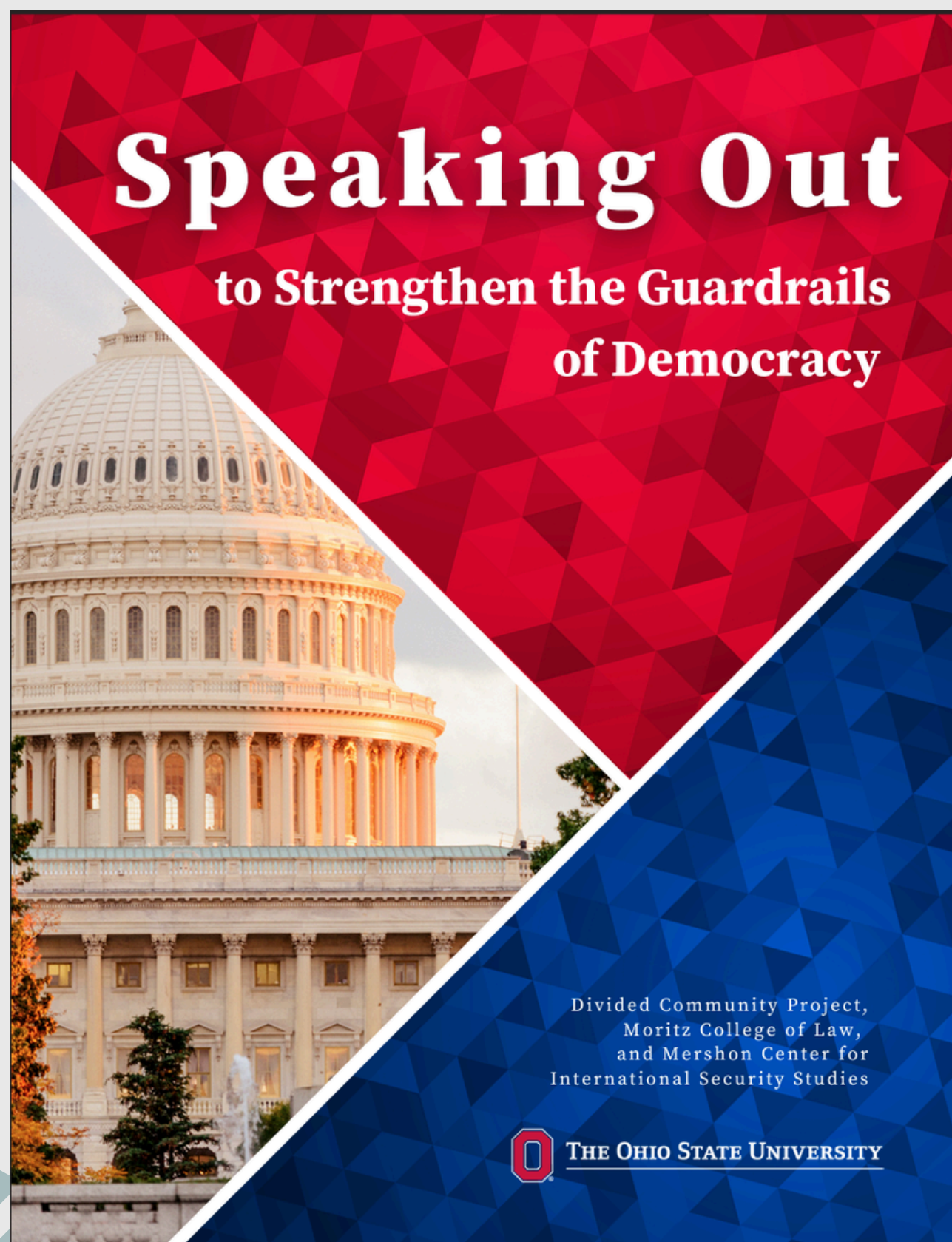
Some of the partners the Mershon Center has co-sponsored with during the 2022-23 year



Engaging Dialogues

This past year, Mershon hosted a wide range of newsmakers, academics, peacebuilders, creatives, activists, and diplomats for both public and in-house conversations. Among many others: Fiona Hill on the Ukraine invasion; Judge J. Michael Luttig on speaking up for democracy; UN Special Rapporteur Fionnuala Ní Aoláin on the tension between counterterrorism and human rights; historian Mel Leffler on the decision-making that led to the Iraq War; filmmaker Jenny Perlin on the prepper industry; policy experts Kouslaa Kessler-Mata and Janet Martinez on the California Truth and Healing Council.





Divided Community Project Issues a New Guide

After the success of its guide to collaborative initiatives for racial equity, now in its second edition, the Divided Community Project has published a new guide for public officials, community leaders and others working to counter polarization: Speaking Out to Strengthen the Guardrails of Democracy. The Divided Community Project is a collaboration between the Mershon Center and Ohio State's Moritz College of Law.

LEARN MORE



The Transitioning From Violence Consortium



This year the TFV Consortium continued its seminar series on the possible uses of ritual for post-conflict reintegration. The culmination was a June workshop at the Corrymeela Community in Ballycastle, Northern Ireland, among peacebuilding practitioners from North and South America, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. An edited volume is in preparation. Mershon Associate Director Teri Murphy leads the consortium with partners at the U.S. Institute of Peace, the Corrymeela Community, the Northern Ireland Executive, and Ulster University.

Exploring Water Security: Three Conversations on Conflict, Innovation, and Transborder Dynamics

With one quarter of the world's population currently facing extreme water stress, the availability of clean water for human and agricultural use is becoming a major security concern. Nicholas Breyfogle (History) offered an overview of historical water conflicts and their outcomes as perspective on predictions of water wars to come. Matthew Birkhold (Germanic Languages and Literatures) discussed the legal and ethical implications of one novel solution: the harvesting of icebergs. Fazlul Haq (Byrd Polar) and Bryan Mark (Geography) detailed transborder tensions, at both state and community level, over the depletion of the Himalayan region's Indus Basin.

MERSHON
MONDAY

THREE
CONVERSATIONS ON
WATER SECURITY



Mershon Center events take Stage, Screen, and Print

Internationally recognized filmmaker Rithy Panh discussed collective trauma and representation with Erin Lin, enhancing our understanding of war's impact on everyday Cambodian life.

The Comics, Security, and the American Mission Conference, co-hosted by the Mershon Center in partnership with the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum, revealed how comic books have shaped the narratives of American wars and foreign policy.

Kevin McClatchy's performance in Scrap Heap, funded by the Mershon Center, vividly portrayed the journey of a US Army veteran transitioning to civilian life, questioning societal responsibilities towards veterans.



Mershon holds Spring Lecture series on War and Security

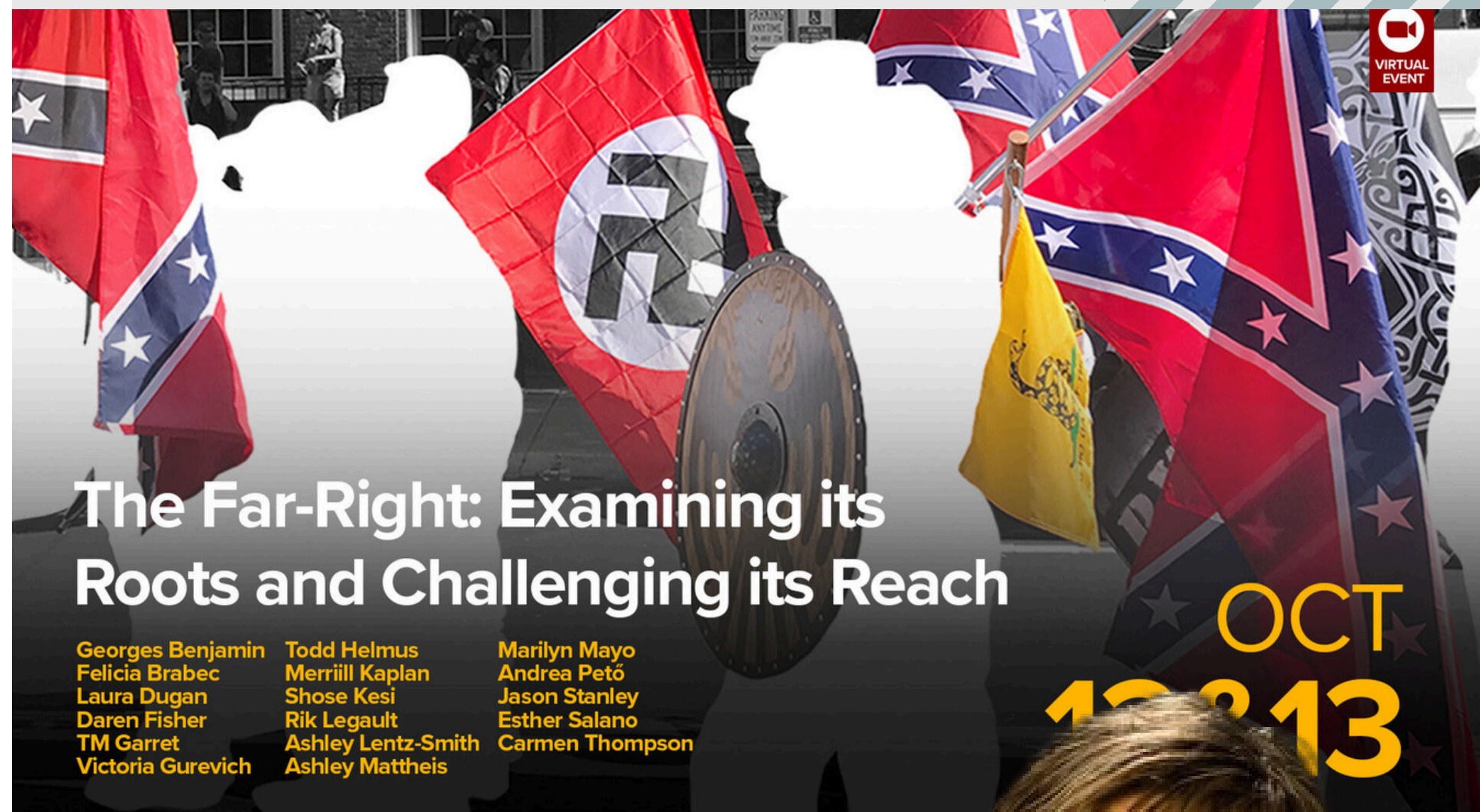
The Mershon Center hosted four lectures on war and security in Spring 2023. Thomas G. Mahnken, President and CEO of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, delved into U.S. Grand Strategy and the Ukraine War. Michael E. O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, presented on America's Major Wars Since 1861, while the eminent historian Melvyn P. Leffler provided an analysis of George W. Bush's decision-making process during the invasion of Iraq.

Finally, the panel discussion "Nature at War: American Environments and World War II" explored the environmental impact of World War II on American lands and industries. Mershoners Nick Breyfogle and Peter Mansoor joined their co-authors in a new edited collection. Cumulatively, these events provided insights into crucial aspects of military strategy, political decision-making, and the environmental consequences of war.



Examining Extremism

Insights and Collaborations from Mershon Center and College of Public Health Symposium



Georges Benjamin
Felicia Brabec
Laura Dugan
Daren Fisher
TM Garret
Victoria Gurevich

Todd Helmus
Merrill Kaplan
Shose Kesi
Rik Legault
Ashley Lentz-Smith
Ashley Mattheis

Marilyn Mayo
Andrea Pető
Jason Stanley
Esther Salano
Carmen Thompson

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12 2022

In October 2022, the Mershon Center and the College of Public Health hosted "The Far-Right: Examining its Roots and Challenging its Reach." The symposium was developed by Mershon Professor of Human Security Laura Dugan and Political Science Ph.D. candidate Victoria Gurevich. In two virtual sessions, speakers from various disciplines and policy sectors including public health, human rights, and law enforcement contributed their perspectives on historical and present dimensions of the problem in several countries. Outcomes of the symposium included the formation of a Central Ohio-based Alliance to Challenge Extremism (ACE) and the preparation of an edited volume, to be published open-access by Oxford University Press.



The New-Wave Realism Conferences: Fostering Young Scholars in International Relations

The fourth and fifth iterations of the New-Wave Realism conference were held with the primary aim of fostering a community of young realist scholars, exploring global developments through realist theories, and addressing the resurgence of realism in international politics amid geopolitical shifts such as the rise of China, populism, and the decline of liberal rule. Co-sponsored by the Program for the Study of Realist Foreign Policy at the Merishon Center for International Security Studies and The Charles Koch Foundation, these free and open public events featured speakers from various institutions, including the Charles Koch Foundation, Columbia University, and The Ohio State University.

The conferences focused on the revival of realism and the need for the United States to reevaluate foreign commitments and military capabilities, contributing to the intellectual discourse on international relations and reflecting a rich tradition of realist thought from Thucydides to modern thinkers like Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer.



Research Initiatives

Centering the Global Periphery focuses on exploring global security through the perspectives of marginalized state and non-state actors, including topics such as populism, polarization, democracy, legacies of empire, environmental sustainability, and racial politics.

Activities throughout 2022-2023 have included working group meetings, speaker series, graduate student opportunities, and are set to culminate in a symposium during 2023-2024. Specific events have covered subjects like recycling practices in Bulgaria, anti-globalism, impacts of colonialism, Turkish authoritarianism, and the rethinking of historical and cultural categories through the project of creolization.



CENTERING
THE GLOBAL PERIPHERY



Legacies of the Iraq War



The Mershon Center hosted a one-day conference to mark the twentieth anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Baghdad, focusing on the Iraq War's historical legacies and long-term impacts. The event, organized by postdoctoral fellow Zaynab Quadri, included experts from various fields and was divided into three panels discussing the war's political and social costs, historical contexts, and cultural and journalistic perspectives. Accompanied by opportunities for audience engagement and informal conversation, the conference served as a platform for collective remembrance and critical analysis of the Iraq War's influence on military intervention, governance, and affected societies.





(RE)IMAGINING ARCHIVES AFTER EMPIRE

C A S E S F R O M A F R I C A

Organized by Mershon Center Postdoctoral Scholar Brooks Marmon and supported by the Mershon Center and the Global Arts + Humanities Discovery Theme (GAHDT), a two-part series titled "(Re)Imagining Archives After Empire: Cases from Africa" was recently conducted.

The first event, "In the Shadow of Empire: Exploring the National Archives of Zimbabwe," featured insights from researchers and archivists on how colonialism's legacies continue to shape Zimbabwe's National Archives. The second seminar, "Transnational and Multi-site Research Projects: Reflections from Ghana," included Emmanuella Amoh discussing her research during Ghana's decolonization era, with the series cumulatively aiming to redefine the ways in which scholars and archivists can pursue studies beyond traditional imperial archives.





Christopher Nichols installed as Hayes Chair

In January, Christopher McKnight Nichols was formally inaugurated as the Wayne Woodrow Hayes Chair in National Security Studies, a position honoring former Ohio State football coach Woody Hayes' interest in military strategy and American history. Prior to joining Ohio State University, Nichols distinguished himself as a professor at Oregon State University and an author of six books on topics including internationalism, globalization, and U.S. history.



During his installation lecture, hosted by David Horn, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, Nichols explored the evolution of the idea of U.S. national security from the 18th century to the modern era, emphasizing a widened view that includes economic security and individual responsibility. Dorothy Noyes, director of the Mershon Center, praised Nichols for his enthusiasm for teaching and his depth of knowledge, signaling a promising future for his role in the center.

Wendt Honored With Skytte Prize in Political Science

Mershon Professor of International Security Alexander Wendt has been awarded the 2023 Johan Skytte Prize in Political Science. Often called the "Nobel of Political Science," the Skytte Prize honors ground-breaking contributions to the field, as judged by an international committee of peer scholars.

Wendt shares the prize with fellow constructivist Martha Finnemore; the committee judged them to have jointly "revolutionized the field of political science" through an approach that has transformed the study of international relations. Emerging as an enfant terrible of the field in 1992 with the startling article, "Anarchy is What States Make of It," Wendt continues to push conceptual and topical frontiers, boldly going to the logical conclusions of theoretical assumptions.

The prize, which includes a cash award and a silver medal, will be presented in the fall at a grand ceremony at Uppsala University in Sweden.



THE JOHAN SKYTTE PRIZE
In Political Science



Liddle receives Indonesia's Achmad Bakrie Award

R. William Liddle, Mershon Center fellow and Professor Emeritus of Political Science, was honored with the prestigious Achmad Bakrie Award for Merit in a grand ceremony in Jakarta. Recognized for his six decades of intellectual dedication to Indonesia, Liddle's work has spanned scholarly research, USAID consulting, visiting professorships, and media commentary, all while becoming fluent in the Indonesian language. He has played a significant role in the study of political leadership, public opinion, and voting behavior in Indonesia, and his continual engagement with critics and publishing in Indonesian reflects his commitment. Beyond his scholarly contributions, he has mentored a stream of young Indonesian political scientists, helping to shape a new generation in the field.



The award, presented in a new category of "International Scientist Devoted to Indonesia," marked Liddle as the first foreign recipient in the Bakrie awards, a testament to his exceptional benefit to Indonesian society.



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Looking Ahead



Krastev Does the Kruzel

Mershon welcomes leading European thinker Ivan Krastev on September 14th for the 2023 Kruzel Lecture. Like 2022's Fiona Hill, Krastev brings both deep learning and personal experience to the dilemmas of post-Cold War relations among neighbors. Author of influential books on the unintended consequences of liberalization and Europeanization, Krastev chairs the Center for Liberal Strategies in Sofia and is a frequent commentator in the international press. The lecture honors the late Joseph J Kruzel, a Mershon affiliate whose service to the Departments of Defense and State included representing the US in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and designing the 1990s Partnership for Peace, a NATO program for building trust and cooperation in Eastern Europe.

LEARN MORE





Scholarship and Innovation: A Snapshot of Our Funded Graduate Students

The Mershon Center is proud to support innovative PhD projects across the university. Students conducting their first fieldwork often sniff out emerging security issues and discover research opportunities that senior scholars may not grasp. This year's cohort includes 9 students from Political Science, 6 from History, 1 from Dance, 1 from Art History, and 1 from Environmental and Natural Resources.

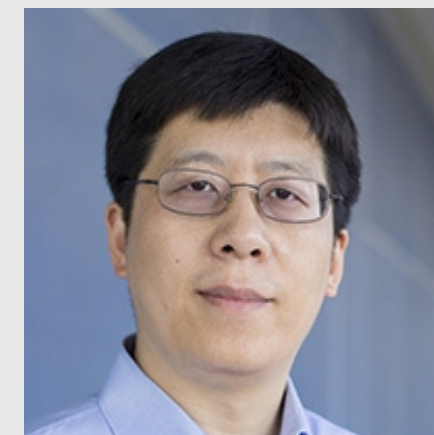
LEARN MORE



Funding Interdisciplinary Research at Ohio State

The Mershon Center is diversifying its research funding for faculty, with special attention to the needs of scholars at mid-career. Among our regular faculty grantees are Yigit Akin (History), Miranda Martinez (Comparative Studies), and Mytheli Sreenivas (Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies), working respectively on sectarian conflict emerging from the Ottoman empire breakup, financial cooperatives in post-hurricane Puerto Rico, and the global politics of the HPV vaccine.

Three faculty members have won two-year New Associate Professor grants, intended to jumpstart interdisciplinary research programs and build a cohort of committed Center affiliates. Sunnie Rucker-Chang (Slavic and East European) is comparing Chinese engagement initiatives in Serbia, Kenya, and Tanzania; Ben McKean (Political Science) is studying worker relations across global supply chains; and new faculty member Haifeng Huang (Political Science) develops his research into Chinese public opinion.





A Strategic Move: National Security Simulation has new home at Mershon

The Mershon Center is developing new training opportunities for students and communities in areas ranging from security studies pedagogy to assessing peace indicators. This year we become the permanent institutional host for Ohio State's National Security Simulation. This is a unique large-scale, real-time, interdisciplinary, immersive, dynamic professional skills training exercise. It involves the interaction of over 100 students and practitioners from policy, legal, military, intelligence, communications, and business management backgrounds to produce decision-making in our republic in the context of constitutional separation of powers, federalism, and a noisy political/media culture.

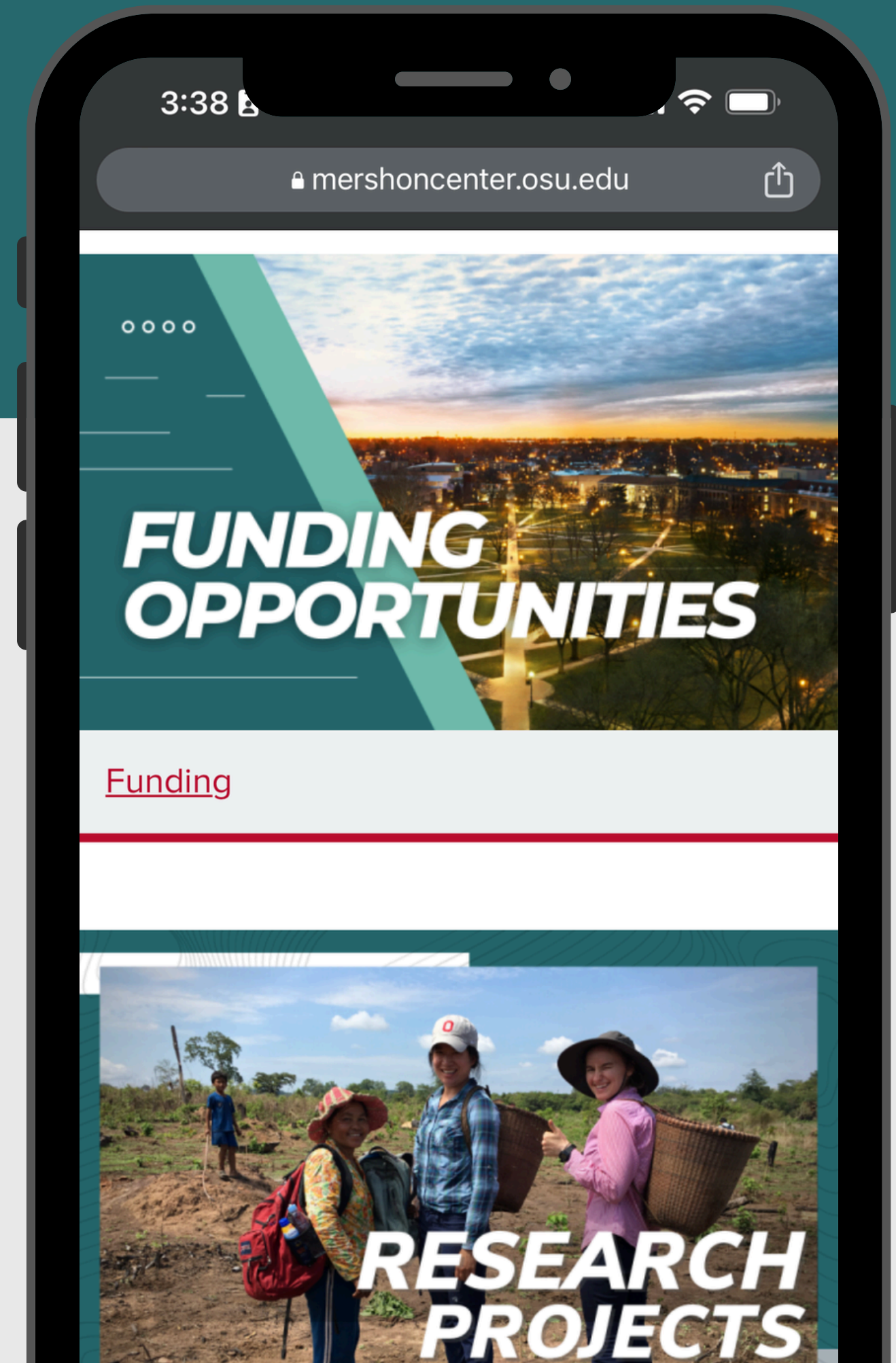
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Or at our website:
mershoncenter.osu.edu

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