

Mershon Center NSF Grant (\$98,000): **Understanding Global Tension**

The Mershon Center received a \$98,000 grant from the National Science Foundation and led a three-day workshop on the causes and consequences of global tensions caused by extremist movements and political violence in the Middle East. The workshop was held in Istanbul at Bogazici University in late June and convened scholars from around the world to study topics such as the influence of religion and ideology and tensions between global and local cultures.

Workshop sessions centered on the global system itself: its structure, how is it changing, and how its features and trajectory affect global tensions. The workshop assembled an international group of social scientists who conduct research on different aspects of globalization and global conflict, and they were able to articulate research priorities that provided the basis for future collaboration and especially the formation of international research teams. Later this month, the Mershon Center is hosting one of these research teams.

Workshop participants were social scientists from the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East. The workshop was interdisciplinary with participants drawn mainly from Sociology and Political Science—two disciplines centrally engaged in the study of globalization, social movements, and political violence. The ultimate goal was to encourage the development of research projects that examine global factors that contribute to conflict and tensions within and among states. Workshop sessions were divided into three sections—the first, “The Global System and Global Tensions,” focused on global tensions that arise from the structure and operation of the global system itself; the second, “Global and Local Synergies and Flashpoints,” focused on the tensions that result from contradictions and conflicts between local and global institutions and ideologies; the third, “Developing a Research Agenda for Understanding Global Tensions,” took stock of ongoing research programs and identified the most promising research questions and strategies for understanding global tensions.

This project's broader impacts are four-fold: First, the papers and discussions in this workshop are of great interest and immense importance to scholars, policymakers, and students interested in understanding the causes, character, and consequences of contemporary global tensions. Second, the recommendations of the workshop participants for productive and promising ways to conceptualize and study global tensions will strengthen future research and scholarship in this area. Third, the gender, national, ethnic, methodological, and disciplinary diversity of workshop participants will serve not only to provide a broad array of ideas and approaches to understanding global tensions, but will provide many opportunities for future collaborations among colleagues working in different disciplines and national settings; our decision to hold the workshop in Istanbul was, in part, to facilitate the participation of international scholars who might find it difficult to attend a workshop held in the U.S. Finally, the international diversity of workshop participants will continue to contribute to social science research capacity building in NSF's three priority areas: people, ideas, and tools.