

[home](#) > [expertise](#) > [graduate student research](#) > ryan irwin[Faculty Spotlight](#)[Use of Force and
Diplomacy](#)[Ideas, Identities](#)[and Decisional](#)[Processes that](#)[Affect Security](#)[Institutions that](#)[Manage Violent](#)[Conflict](#)[Graduate Student
Research](#)

Race and Revolution: The International Dilemma of Apartheid, 1960-69

Principal Investigators: Ryan Irwin

The 1960s saw a clash over how the international political system should relate to the Third World. The great powers of the United States and Soviet Union insisted on viewing the Third World as a proxy battleground for the Cold War, advancing a discourse dominated by the imperatives of order and national security.

At the same time, dozens of newly independent African and Asian states began to see the Cold War as a diversion from the true struggle - a struggle between the North and the South over colonialism, white racism, and economic exploitation. In place of order and national security, these countries demanded emancipation and justice.

The height of this clash, and the focal point of Ryan Irwin's doctoral dissertation, is the transformation of South African Apartheid into an international political crisis.

Irwin aims to discover how "race" became an alternative tool for understanding global politics during the Cold War, and why the use of this new paradigm was unable to achieve a swift end to Apartheid. He also aims to show how the differences between the imperatives of "emancipation" in the South and "order" in the North reflected deeper divisions in the world system.

Using his grant from the Mershon Center, Irwin traveled to South Africa to access documents at the National Archives, Department of External Affairs, National Library, and Library of Parliament.

While there, he found materials detailing nationalist perceptions of the apartheid debate. Even more than expected, these documents showed that the government



Ryan Irwin

Department of History
The Ohio State University

conceived the anti-apartheid movement as a fight over global discourse.

With a belief in the power of social science to help de-legitimize narratives of anti-colonialism, the apartheid state waged an advertising campaign in an attempt to recoup its "lost status" among Western nations.

In conjunction with research trips to investigate government perspectives in the United States and Great Britain, as well as the stances of several multinational corporations based in the United States, Irwin aims to understand why progress on South Africa stalled through the 1960s.

By doing so, Irwin hopes to show how the imperatives of global capitalism and Western hegemony continued to shape and restrain the Third World's attempts to revolutionize an oppressive world order.

© 2006-08 Mershon Center for International Security Studies
1501 Neil Ave.
Columbus, OH 43201
Phone: 614.292.1681
Fax: 614.292.2407
Email: mershoncenter@osu.edu