

MIT Center for International Studies

Established in 1951, the Center for International Studies (CIS) is one of the premier organizations of its kind, a leading venue of global research and education. Its innovative exploration of international issues enriches MIT, the nation, and the world.

The relevance of the Center's work in problem-solving on issues of national security, international political economy, technology policy, and other areas is reflected in dozens of programs, projects, and in the work of faculty and staff through research, public outreach, and publications. Its education program for MIT students in applied international studies, the MIT Science & Technology Initiative (MISTI), is a pioneering effort that helps bring the world to thousands of students and faculty each year through internships abroad and global research collaboration.

Leadership of the Center includes Richard Samuels, Ford International Professor of Political Science, director of the Center; Evan Lieberman, Total Professor of Political Science and Contemporary Africa, director of MISTI; M. Taylor Fravel, Arthur and Ruth Sloan Professor of Political Science, director of the Security Studies Program; Kelly Greenhill, Visiting Associate Professor, director of the Seminar XXI Program; Chappell Lawson, Associate Professor of Political Science, director of the Policy Lab; and Kenneth Oye, Professor of Political Science, director of the Program on Emerging Technology.

The Center's research activities are supported by the active participation of about 36 faculty and researchers, 45 staff, and 30 graduate students, along with numerous distinguished affiliated scholars and practitioners.

The Center and its programs offer fellowships, funding and resources to scholars and students studying international affairs. Its prestigious Robert E Wilhelm Fellows Program brings senior leaders in public affairs to campus to help facilitate and augment research on policy-relevant questions. Recipients have included prime ministers, foreign ministers, senior military officers, and leaders in the NGO community from around the world. The most recent Wilhelm Fellow, Steven N. Simon, held senior positions in both the Obama and Clinton administrations, and has focused at CIS on US foreign policy, including the war on terror, Middle East relations, and the end of imperialism.

The Center also hosts the Elizabeth Neuffer Fellowship, offered to either a female or non-binary human rights reporter from around the world, who completes research and coursework at the Center and journalism internships at The Boston Globe and The New York Times. Gabriela Sá Pessoa, a Brazilian journalist, has focused her time while here last spring on climate justice issues with a focus on indigenous communities in the Amazon of Brazil.

The Center also offers funding opportunities to both faculty and students to support their research and scholarship in the field of international affairs. The Jeanne Guillemin Prize provides financial support to female PhD candidates studying international affairs at MIT. This year, Suzanne Freeman, a PhD student in the Department of Political Science and Mariel Garcia-Montes, a doctoral student in the Science, Technology, and Society Program, were each awarded a Guillemin Prize. The CIS Summer Study Fellowship competition is open to advanced doctoral students in international affairs at MIT, regardless of their home department. This year, 15 students received funding to support for summer support for dissertation research including field research abroad. The CIS/Starr Student Travel Fellowships provides

travel fellowships from MIT doctoral students in international studies who intend to present a paper on international affairs at a professional meeting. This year, five students received travel funding.

The Center sponsors several interdisciplinary working groups that enable the MIT scholarly community tackle research issues that are not confined to a single department or discipline. Several groups are structured to link the efforts of social science professionals with those of engineers and natural scientists on problems of academic and policy significance. They also encourage collaboration between graduate students and faculty members. This year, seven working groups received funding.

The Center through its various programs offers other fellowships and hosts visiting scholars, which are described below.

A transformative era ended for CIS on July 1, 2023, when Professor Samuels, who served as director for more than two decades, transferred leadership to Professor Lieberman. Professor Lieberman will continue the Center's long tradition of collaborating across the Institute to address questions of global significance, from climate change and the challenges of artificial intelligence to democratization, human rights, and human security.

MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives (MISTI)

MISTI is MIT's hub for global experiences. MISTI's experiential learning programs provide students and faculty with unparalleled immersive international experiences that bring MIT's one-of-a-kind education model to life in countries around the world. MISTI embodies MIT's commitment to global engagement and prepares students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

MISTI provides international education and research opportunities for MIT students and faculty through student internship, research, entrepreneurship, teaching, and study abroad programs; faculty funds; international events on campus; and partnerships with companies, research institutions, universities, and government agencies worldwide.

MISTI operates via 26 country and regional programs that manage robust internship programs connecting MIT students to professional experiences abroad. Additionally, MIT students taught via Global Teaching Labs in Andorra, Armenia, Bahrain, Brazil, Chile, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, India, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jerusalem (MEET), Jordan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Tunisia, and the United Kingdom. MIT Global Startup Labs (GSL) ran workshops in Brazil and Uruguay; and the MISTI Global Seed Funds (GSF) introduced new funds in Armenia, India, the Middle East, and Norway.

New Programming

In response to the conflict in Ukraine, MISTI launched a pilot MIT-Ukraine Program to serve as a hub connecting MIT faculty and students to meaningful projects related to Ukraine. The program included: offering classes on-campus to develop a deep understanding of the country; providing student opportunities to work with Ukrainian ventures located in other countries in which MISTI operates; and connecting MIT students and faculty to impact-driven projects in Ukraine.

MISTI Student Programs

MISTI offers MIT undergraduate and graduate students opportunities to intern, research, teach, and study abroad. MISTI experiences, most fully funded, are carefully designed to complement on-campus coursework and research. Rigorous country-specific preparation ensures students build lasting cultural connections while abroad, empowering them to address important global challenges and gain invaluable perspectives that shape their education, career, and worldview.

In the academic year 2022-2023, MISTI offered a total of 1,271 international opportunities to MIT students. Approximately half of these placements were internships or research opportunities in various sectors, including companies, research institutions, NGOs, governments, and university laboratories. These experiences allowed students to gain valuable international exposure and practical knowledge.

During the same period, MISTI played a crucial role in facilitating the arrival of 48 inbound exchange students to MIT. This exchange program enriched the campus community and promoted cross-cultural understanding.

MISTI's impact extended beyond its direct offerings. The program also served as a valuable resource to other initiatives across campus that aimed to send students abroad (i.e. D-Lab, PKG, Sloan Action Learning). MISTI's expertise in global education proved instrumental in supporting and enhancing the experiences of MIT students exploring international opportunities.

MISTI student placements 2022-2023:

- 554 internships
- 386 Global Teaching Labs (GTL) and other short-term teaching.
- 60 short-term research
- 29 training facilitated or supported
- 65 workshops (non-credit)
- 45 study abroad
- 75 Courses (for credit)
- 37 MISTI-led Global Classroom courses (non-credit)
- 20 Global Seed Fund students

MISTI Global Seed Funds (GSF)

MISTI GSF enables MIT faculty and research scientists to launch early-stage international projects and collaborate with colleagues abroad. Through an annual call for proposals, MISTI GSF awards funds that can be used for international travel and meetings with colleagues around the world. Grantees are expected to involve MIT undergraduate and graduate students in their projects.

In 2022-2023, MISTI offered a general fund open to projects in all countries and 27 different country, region, or university-specific funds. 168 applications were received, and over \$2 million was awarded to 91 projects from 24 departments across the entire Institute. These awards bring the total amount awarded to \$24.6 million over the 15-year life of the program.

Training and On-campus Events

Students prepare for their placements through MIT courses in the language, history, and politics of the host country, along with non-credit training modules developed by MISTI staff. MISTI's programs offer the MIT community dozens of trainings and events on international topics in politics, culture, science, technology, history, industry, and the humanities. Student training sessions for the 2022-2023 academic year included specific training for interns working on climate/sustainability and social impact areas. Additionally, in collaboration with the Sloan undergraduate office, MISTI offered students the opportunity to take part in the iDiplomat program, learning about the entrepreneurial ecosystems in which they are doing the internships.

MISTI also continued to develop innovative programming to engage the MIT community. Discussions around critical topics such as climate change and the Ukraine invasion helped provide context for rapidly changing global circumstances.

Personnel Notes

MISTI welcomed new staff members: Myriam Zuber, Program Manager, MIT-France and Belgium and Mackenzie Griffith, Program Coordinator. Mai Hassan, Faculty Director, MIT-Africa and Areg Danagoulian, Faculty Co-Director MIT-Eurasia also joined MISTI faculty leadership.

Program on Emerging Technologies

CIS created the Program on Emerging Technologies (PoET) with support from a National Science Foundation IGERT grant. The program was founded by Kenneth Oye, Merritt Roe Smith, Daniel Hastings, and Dava Newman and linked Political Science, Science, Technology, and Society, and Engineering.

Current activities focus on assessing and managing the benefits and risks of biological, medical, and information technologies. PoET's research, education, and policy work is collaborative, with teams of technologists, scientists, social scientists, and policymakers working jointly on responsible innovation.

Research

- Completed two projects on development and evaluation of safeguards to limit potential security, safety, and environmental effects of biological engineering applications with emphasis on: (1) Gene drive control of vector borne disease, with NIH NExTRAC working group on gene drives; and (2) Genetically engineered chassis for materials production with Wageningen University and Yale University. Currently, we are preparing for next phase work on engineered desalination plants alongside Colorado State University.
- Completed a study on side effects of policies addressing information hazards. Controls on information flows to malevolent actors actually also limit access to information for scientists seeking to advance knowledge, for biosafety officers and benign technologists seeking to avoid inadvertently creating hazards, and for policy communities seeking knowledge to inform deliberation.

- Continued research on adaptive management of risks associated with emerging technologies, pharmaceuticals, finance, and security affairs.

Public Service

- With the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, PoET served as a hub for the Synthetic Biology Policy Group, a network that meets weekly to discuss topics in biomedical and biological engineering. The network includes participants from National Academy of Sciences, the Engineering Biology Research Consortium, the American Biological Safety Association International, Harvard and Emory Medical Schools, and Stanford Biological Engineering and the MIT Washington Office. Since January 2020, the group has discussed COVID related technical topics and policy issues, biosafety and biosecurity, and biological industrial policy.
- PoET Director Kenneth Oye serves as a member of the National Institutes of Health advisory committee on Novel and Exceptional Technology (NExTRAC), an advisor to the British Royal Society of Engineering Project on Laws and Regulations Fit for Complex Systems, as well as to the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs on International Relations and Technology Policy. He organized sessions on security implications of information technology and biological technology and on techno-industrial policy for 80 Seminar XXI Fellows from the US national security community.

MIT Policy Lab

The Policy Lab increases both the impact of MIT research and expertise on public policy by providing specialized guidance and training for principal investigators. The Policy Lab supports all types of research disciplines, from computer science to linguistics. It also engages with all levels of public policy, ranging from city councils to the United Nations. Specifically, the Policy Lab:

- proactively identifies policy-relevant research at MIT.
- collaborates with researchers to create and implement policy engagement strategies.
- provides education to prepare researchers for effective policy engagement.
- reactively mobilizes research and expertise for timely needs of policymakers.

As a result of engagement supported by the Policy Lab, MIT researchers establish themselves as both resources and advisors to policymakers. In addition, they develop insight into improved research design for producing scholarship with greater potential for policy impact.

In FY2023, the Policy Lab transitioned from an annual call for proposals to a rolling application process; this was to provide greater agility in supporting PIs and to enable a better response to timely policy needs. Eight policy impact projects were supported, half of which utilized MIT research to inform climate change policy. The Policy Lab also provided education to students and postdocs by facilitating policy engagement workshops during IAP 2023, as well as by providing guest lectures within and beyond MIT. The existing online training course, “Tools for Academic Engagement in Public Policy,” is being updated and will be transitioned from edX to MITx.

The Policy Lab was supported by funding from private donors, the provost, and CIS, and continues to solicit funding to increase the volume of MIT research that can be brought to bear on public policy.

With the hiring of Drew Story, PhD as the managing director, the Policy Lab resumed operations in August 2022 after a 2-year dormancy period. Story utilizes formal training in science communication, academic expertise, and extensive experience advising policymakers at state and federal levels to support PIs in leveraging their research for societal benefit through public policy. Associate Professor of Political Science J. Chappell H. Lawson is the faculty director and provides additional mentorship to PIs.

Public Programs

In 2022-23, CIS offered a diverse and enriching public education program. The Center's Starr Forums and public lectures continued to produce events on pressing global issues with leading academics, policymakers, and journalists. The program also continued with a weekly webinar series, MIT X True Africa University (MIT X TAU), in late spring. MIT X TAU explored sustainability issues in Africa with marquee speakers both originally from and who currently reside in Africa. That series also included one hybrid event featuring the president of Cape Verde, which was co-sponsored with the Office of the Associate Provost for International Activities.

CIS events are often co-sponsored with DLCs and student groups across the Institute. But we also co-sponsor with groups outside of the Institute. For example, this year we worked with Harvard University's Center for African Studies, the US-Japan Foundation, and the Washington D.C. think tank Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

To that end, we produced ten (two hybrid, one in-person only) Starr Forums, eight (one hybrid) MIT X TAU webinars; and an additional four hybrid events from our migration seminar series. Our in-person events saw a returned interest of in-person events with several seeing 120-plus in attendance. The webinars continued to garner significant interest with the majority having more than 150 virtual attendees.

Our event videos are archived on our YouTube channel and averaged an additional 1,300 views per event for this year's programming.

Highlights from the Starr Forums, the Center's flagship public event series, included:

- **"Ukraine and Russia one year on: The domestic impact of the war,"** with Yevgenia Albats (CEO, The New Times), Olga Onuch (University of Manchester), Carol Saivetz (MIT), and Elizabeth Wood (MIT);
- **"The Iraq invasion: 20 years later,"** with Peter Krause (Boston College), Marsin Alshamary (Boston College), Roger Petersen (MIT), and Steven Simon (MIT);
- **"Reinventing Japan...again?"** with Richard Samuels (MIT), Mary Brinton (Harvard), Eric Heginbotham (MIT), Ulrike Schaede (UCSD), and Kiyoteru Tsutsui (Stanford);
- **"Grand delusion: The rise and fall of American ambition in the Middle East,"** with Steven Simon (MIT) and Andrew Bacevich (Quincy Institute).

- **"Iran and the struggle for 'normalcy': Woman, life, freedom,"** with Pouya Alimagham (MIT), Maryam Alemzadeh (Oxford School of Global and Area Studies), Yalda Hamidi (Minnesota State University), and Mahrou Zhaf (St Lawrence University);
- **"Xi Jinping's third term: Challenges for the United States,"** with Yasheng Huang (MIT), M Taylor Fravel (MIT), Arthur Kroeber (Gavekal Economics), Susan Shirk (University of California San Diego), and Jessica Chen Weiss (Cornell University);
- **"Speaking truth to a new power: Perspectives on the free press and democracy in South Africa,"** with Emmanuel K Akyeampong (Harvard), Branko Brkic (Daily Maverick), Styli Charalambous (Daily Maverick), Eve Fairbanks (journalist), and Evan Lieberman (MIT). Events focused on the war in Ukraine included:
- **"Energy as a weapon of war: Russia, Ukraine, and Europe in challenging times,"** with Margarita Balmaceda (Seton Hall University and Harvard), Constanze Stelzenmüller (Brookings), Carol Saivetz (MIT), and Elizabeth Wood (MIT).

We produced a memorial service to honor the life of John Tirman, a principal research scholar and executive director at CIS, who passed away suddenly last August.

The office of public programs manages the external web site, the intranet site, newsletters for both external and internal communications, and provides ongoing media support through news releases, direct media promotion and outreach, and writing and placing news features. This included multiple articles for *MIT News*, such as write-ups on the leadership transition at CIS, several of our events, and faculty and fellow profiles.

The CIS web site increased traffic to 120,000 visitors this year, which is up from 108,718 visitors last year. The CIS YouTube channel received 151.2 K views this year with an average watch time of 50 minutes. We added 1.7 K subscribers and, as mentioned above, averaged 1,300 views per video from this year's events alone.

We had 5,300 engagements (via likes, retweets, link clicks) on Twitter and added 746 new followers. Facebook received 4,503 unique visits. Our Instagram was launched in late August and has gained 361 followers.

Seminar XXI

For close to four decades, CIS has directed and hosted Seminar XXI—an educational program for senior military officers, government officials, and executives in non-governmental organizations in the US national security community. Seminar XXI provides future leaders of this community with the contextual knowledge and analytic skills needed to understand other countries and foreign relations more broadly.

Each year, a cohort of approximately 80 fellows meets nine times—six evening sessions and three multi-day weekend sessions—between September and May in Washington, D.C., and northern Virginia. Over the course of the year, fellows learn to recognize and respond to the assumptions underlying foreign society assessments and explore policy issues critical to US interests through various lenses and from different viewpoints.

At each session, eminent speakers present alternative perspectives to understand a country or policy challenge. The fundamental criterion in choosing Seminar XXI fellows is that they currently hold or are expected to hold top posts in the military or government within the next five years.

The program has been in existence since 1986 and, as of now, has more than 2,760 alumni. Kelly M. Greenhill, Associate Professor of Political Science at Tufts University and Senior Research Fellow and Visiting Associate Professor at MIT's Center for International Studies, is the Director of Seminar XXI. The Assistant Director is Tisha Voss.

Security Studies Program

The Security Studies Program (SSP) is a graduate-level research and education program. Its senior research and teaching staff include social scientists and policy analysts. Security Studies is a recognized field of study in the Department of Political Science, and its courses emphasize grand strategy, causes and prevention of conflict, military operations and technology, and defense policy. A special feature of the program is the integration of technical and political analyses of national and international security problems. M. Taylor Fravel, Arthur and Ruth Sloan Professor of Political Science, is the director of the program.

SSP publishes an [annual report](#) and a [quarterly digital newsletter](#). In addition, members of the program have regularly made themselves available for a variety of [media appearances](#), both in print and online.

Ruina Nuclear Age Speaker Series

The SSP Ruina Nuclear Age Speaker Series (named in honor of former SSP director Professor Jack Ruina) was held on November 1, 2022. This year's speaker was Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins, the United States Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security. She spoke on the past and enduring importance of non-proliferation and arms control in US foreign policy.

General Doolittle Award Dinner

The General James Doolittle Award Dinner was held on April 25, 2023. This year's featured speaker and Doolittle award recipient was Brian Weeden, the director of Program Planning for Secure World Foundation. Weeden spoke about his career journey, space sustainability, and challenges in the space domain. In April 2017, SSP received a generous gift from the Pierre (1988) and Amy Chao Fund to support and sustain SSP's annual Doolittle Award dinner.

SSP Special Seminars

SSP faculty and scholars frequently participate as moderators and guest speakers in the CIS Starr Forum event series. Please refer to the CIS event listing for a complete list.

October 21, 2022

The War in Ukraine: Military, Political, and Economic Lessons for the United States

Speakers: M. Taylor Fravel, SSP; Barry Posen, SSP; Carol Saivetz, SSP; Mariya Grinberg, SSP

November 8, 2022

Update on Iraq: Prospects for Government Formation, Internal Stability, Relations with Neighbors, and Cooperation with the US

Speakers: Steven Simon, Robert E Wilhelm Fellow, CIS

March 20, 2023

Book talk with author, Jesse Driscoll: Ukraine's Unnamed War: Before the Russian Invasion of 2022

Speakers: Jesse Driscoll, University of California San Diego; Carol Saivetz (co-chair), SSP; Elizabeth Wood (co-chair), MIT

Lincoln Laboratory Speaker Series

March 7, 2023

"Data Science and Women in the Alt-Right"

Richard Nielsen, SSP Faculty Member

May 17, 2023

"The DOD National Military Strategy Document"

Barry Posen, SSP Faculty Member

May 22, 2023

"Japan's New Grand Strategy"

Richard J Samuels, SSP Faculty Member

Wednesday Seminar Series

Sustaining a long tradition, SSP continued the Wednesday Seminar Series with nineteen in total. These seminars offer talks on topics relevant to national defense and international relations, including cyber security, China, Iraq, national security decision making, military technology, military history, and nuclear security. Speakers included academics, military officers, and think tank analysts. The [speaker series](#) is open to the entire MIT community for in-person attendance, and the live-stream is available to the general public. The SSP YouTube channel received over 200,000 views during the past academic year and added over 3,500 subscribers.

Research and Education

Program research is built around the interests of the faculty, the dissertations of the graduate students, and occasional commissioned projects. Key research areas are:

Nuclear Strategy and Statecraft

- Examining the underlying logic of current nonproliferation strategies
- North Korea and Iran
- Resource allocation and counter-proliferation policy
- The nuclear strategies of middle powers
- The history of nuclear issues, especially proliferation
- China's nuclear strategy

Change and Stability in Asia

- Preventing conflict in Asia's territorial and maritime disputes
- China's military and grand strategy
- Conflict over Taiwan
- US-China relations
- China's economic statecraft
- Japan's foreign and security policies
- Competition between India-Pakistan and India-China

US Foreign and Defense Policy

- Reassessing US grand strategy
- The nature and limits of US military power
- The future of conventional warfare
- Economics and security
- Technology and escalation

Internal Conflict

- Identity politics
- Political violence
- Civil war
- Counterinsurgency
- Post-conflict reconstruction

The program has a visiting fellows program in addition to five military fellows that rotate annually from the US Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. The Stanton Foundation has awarded funds to support three scholars on nuclear security policy, and a chair in political science. The program just completed its eleventh year of the fellowship, which included three postdoctoral fellows.

The Charles Koch Foundation funded a two-year joint MIT SSP-Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center fellowship program. It was intended to support research addressing fundamental issues of US grand strategy, foreign policy, and America's role in the world. SSP hosted two postdoctoral fellows during the final year of this fellowship.

The program receives major support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which awarded SSP a 24-month grant to support our research on the global "Diffusion of Power." It also received funding from The Anne and Paul Marcus Family Foundation, among other foundations and donors, and in May 2022 received a one-year award from Lincoln Laboratory.

SSP Wargaming Lab

With support from The Anne and Paul Marcus Family Foundation, the SSP Wargaming was established in Fall 2022. The Lab held its first major activity on June 9-10, 2023, with a two-day U.S.-China economic conflict simulation. Thirty leading experts from the United States around the globe convened to play nearly a dozen countries during the two-day simulation, in which the United States used economic statecraft tools to respond to a political-military crisis over Taiwan.

The Lab is co-directed by SSP's Eric Heginbotham and Erik Lin-Greenberg and is an independent and university-based initiative aimed at developing the use of wargames and simulations as rigorous,

accessible, and transparent tools to enhance understanding of international politics and security. Leveraging SSP's expertise in security studies and its extensive network of scholars and national security practitioners, the Wargaming Lab engages policymakers, inform public policy, and advance academic research on critical national security issues. Significant funding has been secured to continue and expand the Lab's activities over the next two academic years.