



MERSHON CENTER for International Security Studies

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The Mershon Center and
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Director's Speaker Series

MARK STEWART

"Climate Change Risk Assessment: Is Adaptation a Workable Solution to Climate Change?"

Monday, September 08, 2014, 3:30PM - 5:00PM
Mershon Center for International Security Studies
1501 Neil Ave. Columbus, OH 43201

[Register here for this event](#)

Mark Stewart is director of the Centre for Infrastructure Performance and Reliability at University of Newcastle in Australia. He is the co-author of *Probabilistic Risk Assessment of Engineering Systems* (Chapman & Hall, 1997) and *Terror, Security, and Money: Balancing the Risks, Benefits, and Costs of Homeland Security*, with John Mueller (Oxford University Press, 2011), as well as more than 350 technical papers and reports. He has more than 25 years of experience in probabilistic risk and vulnerability assessment of infrastructure and security systems.

Abstract

The climate change debate is often characterized by worst-case thinking, cost neglect, probability neglect, and avoidance of the notion of acceptable risk. Much of the climate change debate has focused on costly measures to reduce CO2 emissions. Climate adaptation, such as reducing vulnerability of infrastructure to extreme weather events, is much less costly, more effective in the short-term, and in many cases a sound investment even if climate projections turn out to be inaccurate.

Mark Stewart, a visiting fellow at Mershon, and professor of civil engineering at University of Newcastle in Australia, is applying risk and cost-benefit considerations to climate adaptation strategies, and determining whether they are cost-effective or not. He is leading a \$3 million project assessing the cost-effectiveness of adaptation strategies for Australian infrastructure for extreme weather events. Stewart has shown that small improvements to house designs at a one-off cost of \$2,000 per house can achieve billions of dollars of net benefit, which offsets the predicted adverse effects of climate change for a very modest cost.

Climate change is also seen as a threat to national security. The presentation will show that climate change threats are manageable at a cost to the United States of no more than \$20 billion per year. However, this would amount to no more than 0.5 percent of the U.S. federal budget - requiring an adjustment that is not very significant. Moreover, the time frame for climate change to have an effect would be long - 50 to 100 years - so there is time to adapt.



Mark Stewart
Director of the Centre for
Infrastructure
Performance and
Reliability
University of Newcastle

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