On September 13, 2023, Ohio State hosted Dr. Mark Stewart, Distinguished Professor of Civil Engineering, and Director of the Centre for Built Infrastructure Resilience at the University of Technology Sydney.

Stewart explored how terrorism and climate change debates are often characterized by worst-case thinking, cost neglect, probability neglect, and avoidance of the notion of acceptable risk. Risk-based approaches are well-suited for infrastructure decision-making in these situations. Structural reliability, systems modeling, life-cycle assessment, probabilistic methods and cost-effectiveness are all effective tools to use in policy-making and decision-making.
"Trying to predict the future is very unreliable."

Planning for risks is difficult to do in the best case scenario, and when this is combined with doom-and-gloom, worst-case scenario thinking, realistic outcomes may not emerge.

"Often in these conversations, cost is never mentioned."

Even if risk reduction solutions are proportionate to the risk, cost mitigation is often not proportionate. Risk mitigation spending can be subject to the law of diminishing returns.

"We need to be practical, not reactive."

Quantifying risk, and planning (and engineering) for the extremes can help mitigate high risk situations with relatively low cost, especially at the global infrastructure level.

However, implementation remains a challenge.

Example: cyclones cause significant damage to roofs in Australia. Planners found that standard roof construction used nails; a simple switch to screws mitigated roof damage: but took 10 years to be implemented as official construction policy.
Stewart and Ohio State Professor Emeritus Dr. John Mueller have co-published multiple books and articles on the quantification of risk.

- Evaluating Counterterrorism Spending (2014)
- Are We Safe Enough?: Measuring and Assessing Aviation Security (2017)

Terrorism exists somewhat outside this spectrum: while there is an extremely low risk percentage-wise of terrorist events, they have huge social and cultural effects, which can in turn cost billions of dollars in business interruption, changes in travel and tourism, and general loss of confidence.