Escalating societal losses associated with foreseeable and unexpected events such as natural disasters, pandemic outbreaks, terrorism, and the mounting dangers associated with cyber-attacks are focusing attention on new approaches to reducing damages, mitigating consequences and adapting to non-stationary risks. In the United States, the Obama Administration has identified resilience as a national imperative in recent presidential policy directives, strategy documents, and organizational changes. It has defined resilience as “the ability to prepare for and adapt to changing conditions and withstand and recover rapidly from disruptions...[it] includes the ability to withstand and recover from deliberate attacks, accidents, or naturally occurring threats or incidents.” However, there is an array of barriers to making greater societal resilience a reality, necessitating a new strategic framework to guide national and international efforts. Additionally, the resilience imperative creates new challenges and opportunities for engineering research and education. These include improving the understanding of how engineered assets and large critical infrastructure systems can be better designed to adjust their functioning prior to, during, and after naturally-occurring and human-made disruptive events of growing complexity and uncertainty, so that those assets and systems remain operational and safe, and can recover quickly.

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