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Security Studies

Senior Security Studies Course

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TOPIC OVERVIEW



Strategic Studies Center,
National Defence Studies
Institute

STRATEGIC THINKING & MESSAGING IN COMPLEX SECURITY ENVIRONMENTS

DR. ETHAN ALLEN AND PROF. MARY MARKOVINOVIC

Overview

Loizos Heracleous states that “The purpose of strategic thinking is to discover novel, imaginative strategies which can re-write the rules of the competitive game; and to envision potential futures significantly different from the present.” This presentation attempts to address that challenge head-on, and to provide some guidance, based on the ideas of Jeanne Liedtka, on how to practice strategic thinking and apply it to issues of crisis management. A systems’ perspective is essential to strategic thinking as is a focus on intent (or framing a problem). Other elements of strategic thinking are thinking in time, linking past to present to future outcomes; hypothesis testing (through scenario generation); and intelligent opportunism (based on reiterative analysis and situational awareness). In addition, we’ll look at strategic and crisis communications and the importance of being able to put thoughts into the right words for the right audience.

Objectives

- Understand the concept of strategic thinking and its relation to strategic planning.
- Understand the dependence of strategic thinking on systems’ analysis and framing.
- Understand the importance of putting strategic thoughts into strategic communication.
- Evaluate the applicability of teaching strategic thinking in senior security studies.

Recommended Readings

A classic article on strategic thinking: Liedtka, Jeanne M. 1998. “Strategic Thinking: Can It Be Taught?” in Long Range Planning 31:1, pp. 120-129. Available at:

http://www.egovernment.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/121125/6Liedtka.PDF

Useful resources for strategic messaging:

Center for Disease Control Risk and Crisis Communications

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/manual/index.asp>

CERC Messages and Audiences: https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/ppt/CERC_Messages_and_Audiences.pdf