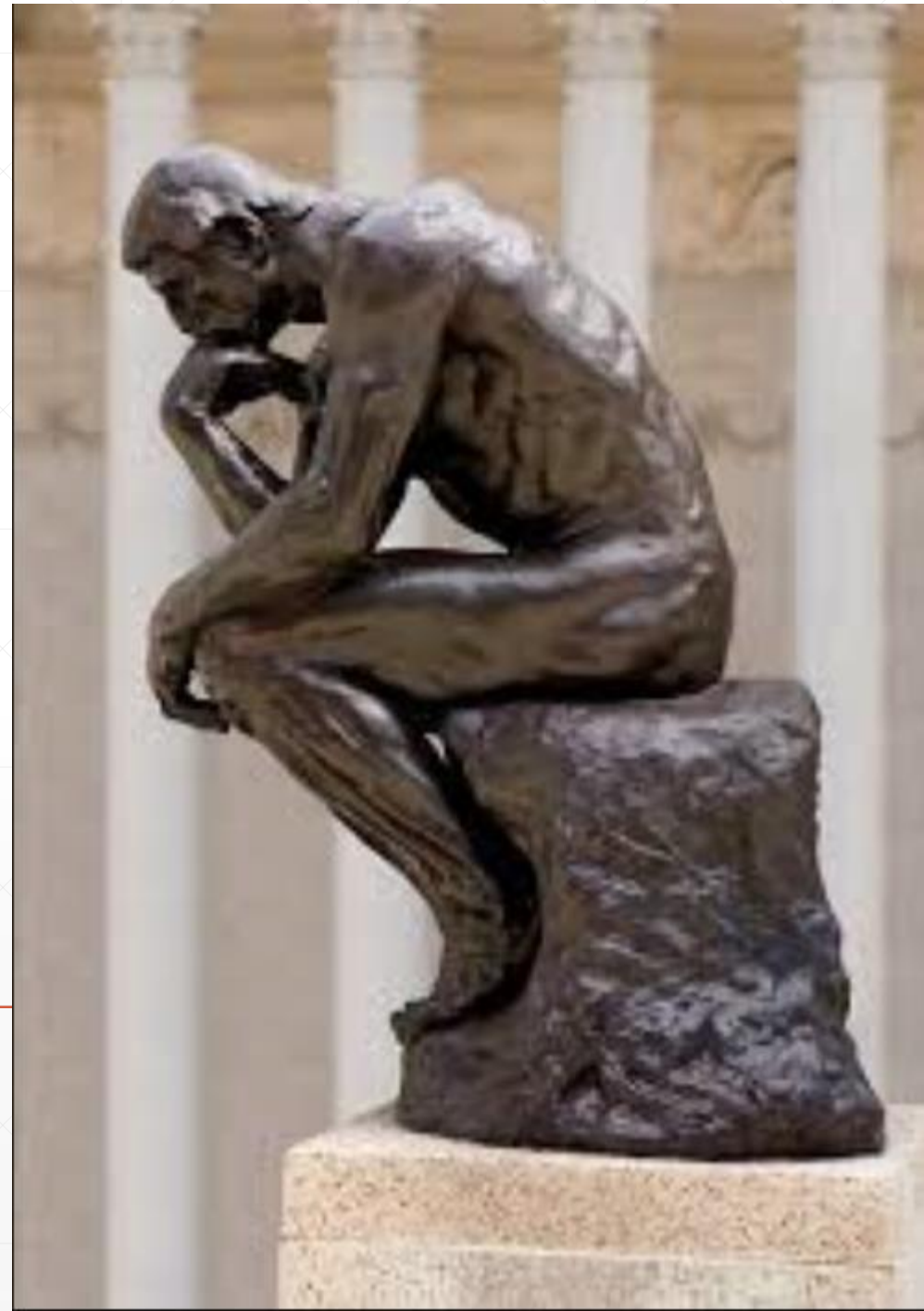


Strategic Thinking

Ethan Allen, Ph.D.
Senior Security Studies Course
17 May 2021

With thanks to Dr. Scott Hauger for
permission to use his materials



Agenda

- **What is strategic thinking?**
 - **The elements of strategic thinking**
 - **Strategic thinking and crisis management**
-

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What Is Strategic Thinking?

- Usually associated with and contrasted to strategic planning:
 - “Strategic planning ... is an analytical process.... Its **outcome is a plan.**
 - “Strategic thinking is... a synthesizing process utilizing intuition and creativity whose **outcome is ‘an integrated perspective of the enterprise.’”**

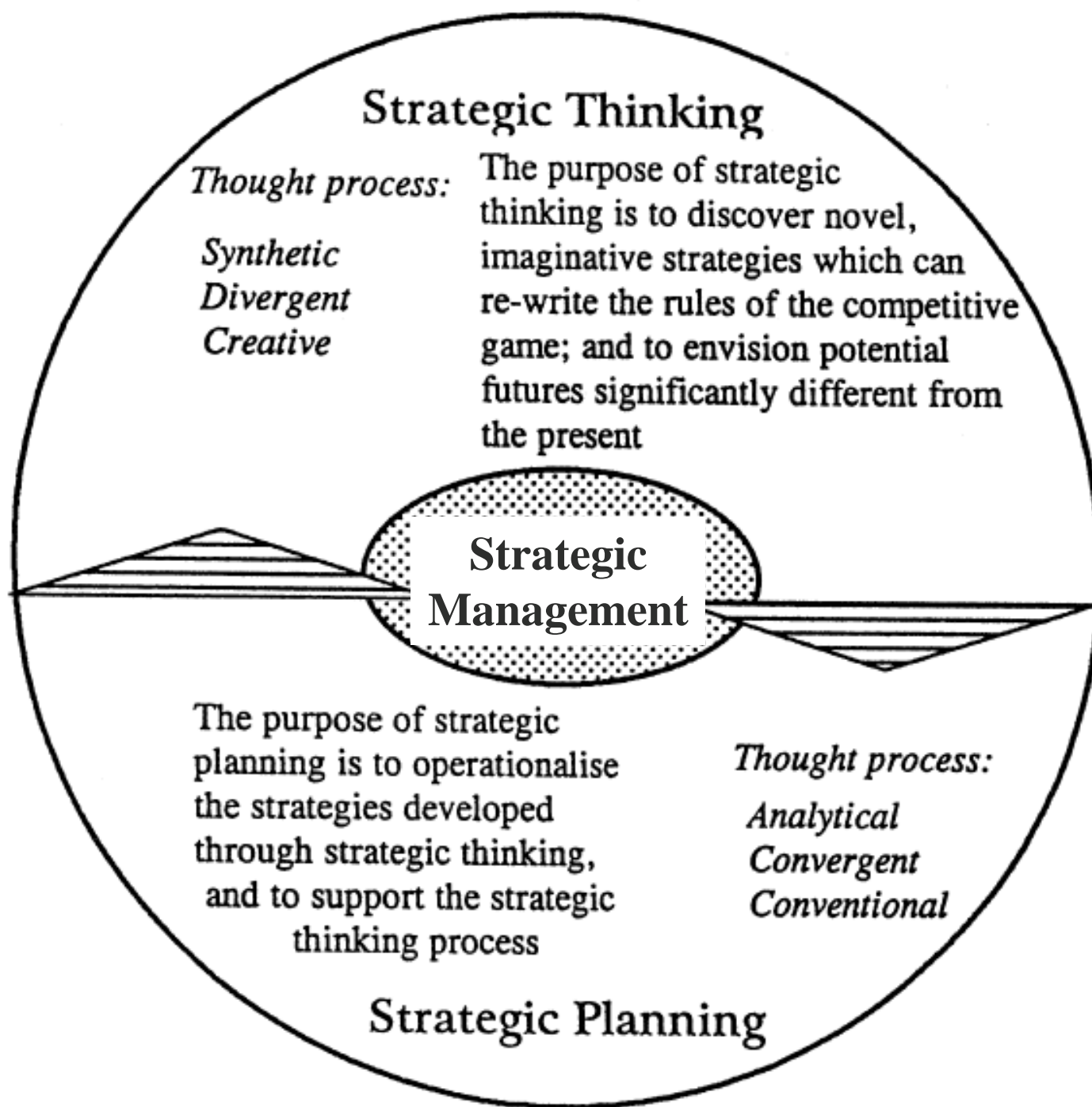
Source: Jeanne M. Liedtka. 1998. “Strategic Thinking: Can it Be Taught?,” *Long Range Planning* 31(1), pp. 120-129, p. 122.

Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning



In preparing for battle, I have always found
that plans are useless but planning is
indispensable.

(Dwight D. Eisenhower)



Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning

“Yin and Yang”

Source: Loizos Heracleous. 1998. “Strategic Thinking or Strategic Planning,” in *Long Range Planning* 31(3), 481-487, p. 485.

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- What is strategic thinking?
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 - Strategic thinking and crisis management
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Strategic Thinking Comprises Five Elements

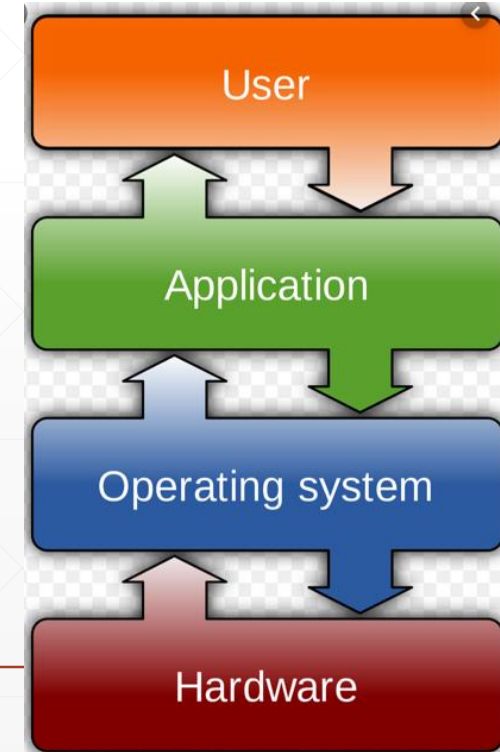
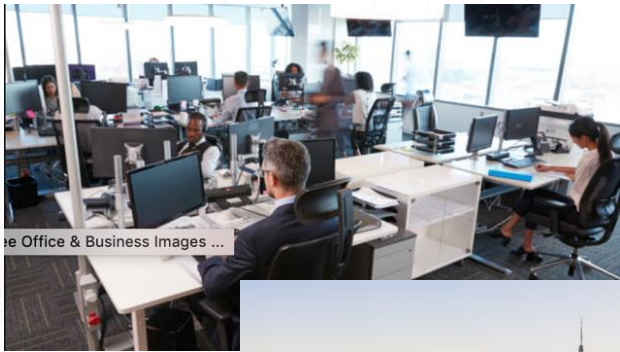
- 1. Systems perspective**
- 2. Focus on intent**
- 3. Thinking in time**
- 4. Hypothesis testing**
- 5. Intelligent opportunism**

Source: Jeanne M. Liedtka.
1998. "Strategic Thinking: Can
it Be Taught?", *Long Range
Planning* 31(1), pp. 120-129.

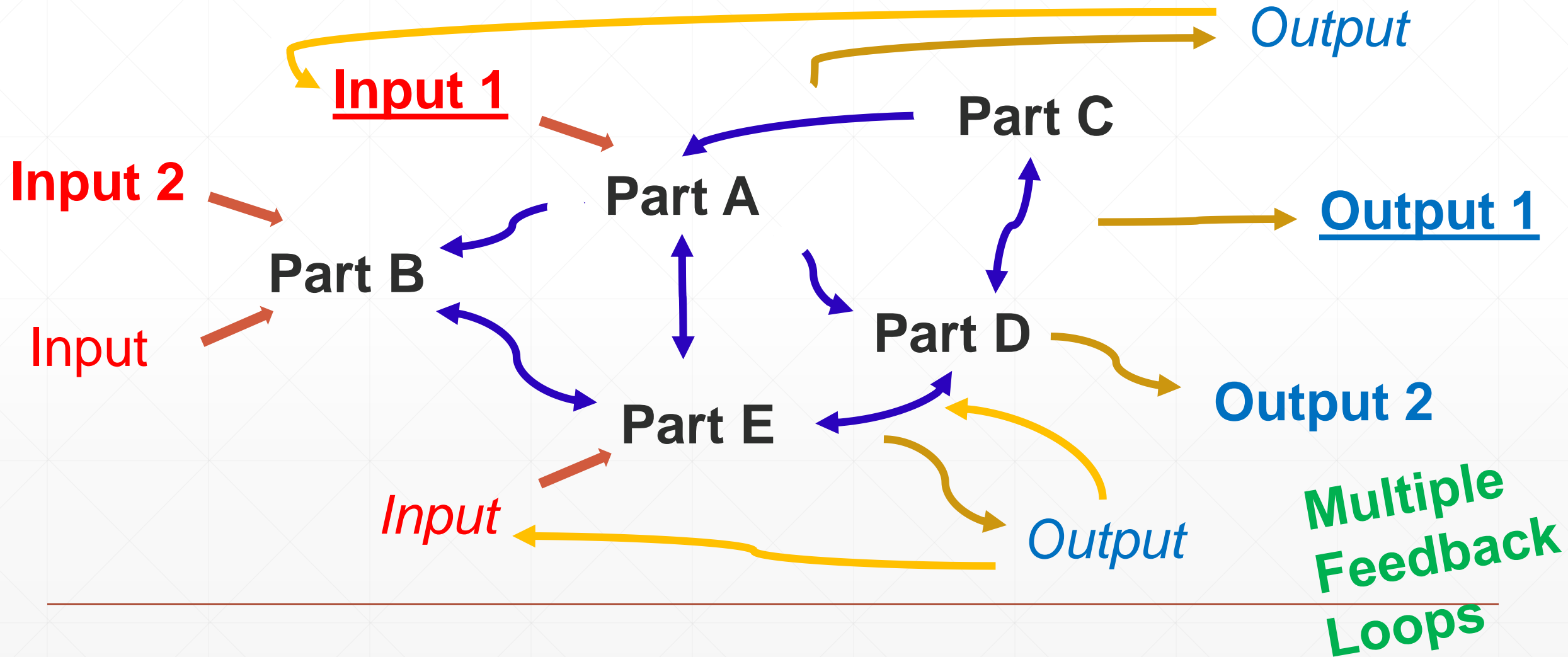
1. Strategic Thinking Requires a Systems Perspective

System

- a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole
- an organized set of doctrines, ideas, or principles
- an organized or established procedure



Key Idea of Systems Thinking

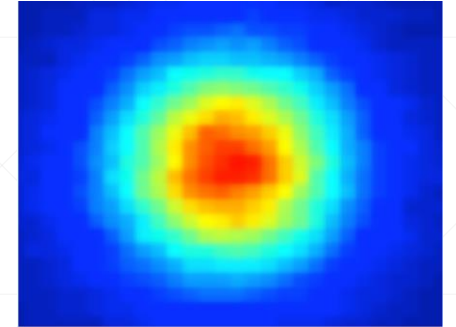


Systems Thinking Underlies Strategic Thinking



- **What are the components?**
 - **How do they interact?**
- **Which one(s) can be acted upon?**

- **Understand levels of complexity involved and potential for unintended consequences.**
- **Recognize and involve ALL stakeholders.**
- **Know that system mapping is shaped by intent.**





**Example,
Systems
Perspective:**

Idealized Risk Assessment Actor Network

Source:

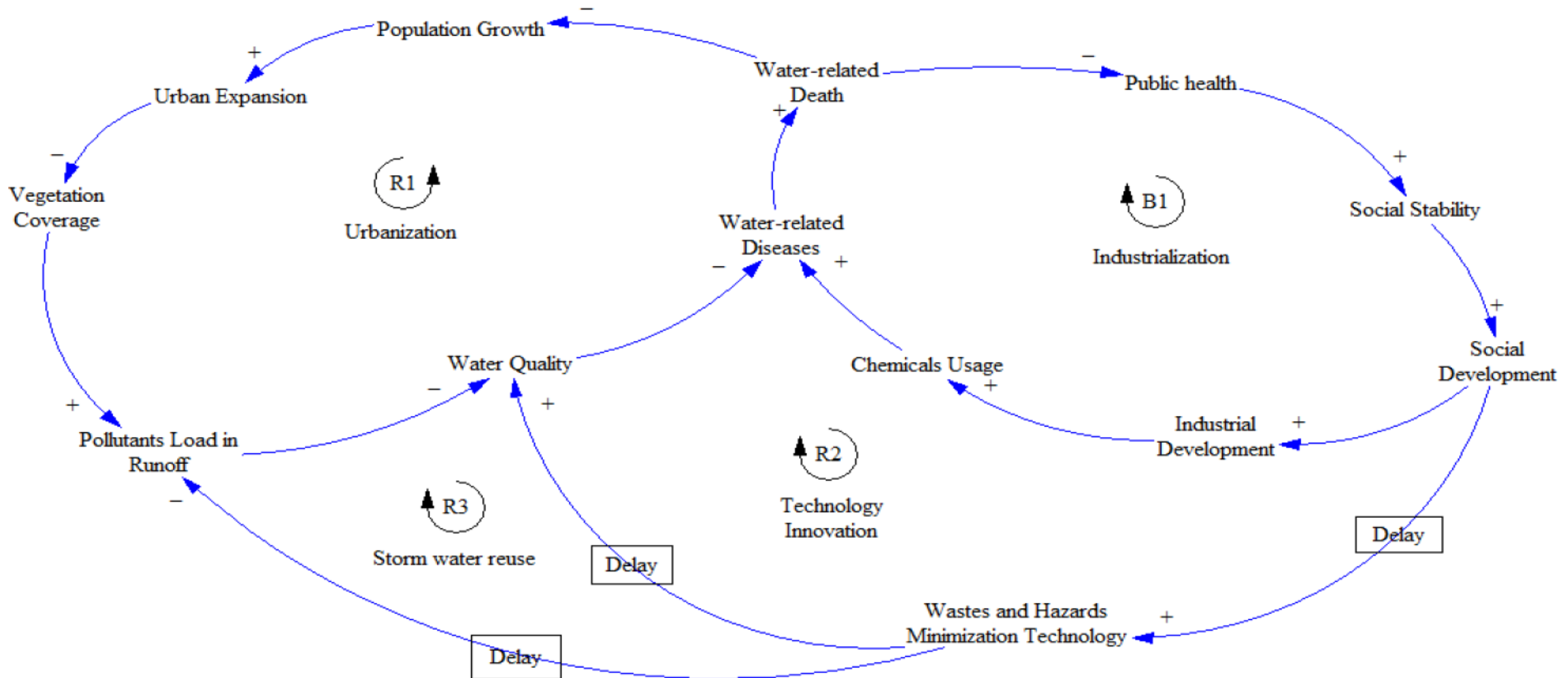
[Tim Prior and Florian Roth. 2013.
Preparing for Disasters in Global Cities.
Zurich: Center for Security Studies](#)

Example, Systems Perspective: Domain Mapping Afghanistan Stability



Source:
Dr. Deon
Canyon,
APCSS

Example, Systems Perspective: Water Quality Causal Loop



2. Strategic Thinking Requires a Focus on Intent

“To resolve a crisis, you need to identify what a good outcome will be. In other words, ask the question: what does good look like? We call this the Strategic Intent.”

--Crisis-solutions.com

- **How do I want to change the system?**
- **What do I want to happen?**
- **How should I frame the problem?**
- **How should I communicate it?**

Strategic Thinking Intent: Focus on the system

- What specific **parts** of what system(s) are involved?
 - Why? (What is the problem you're addressing?)
 - What particular **interactions** are you changing?
 - How? (Who will need to do what differently, when?)
 - What **outputs** do you want to achieve?
 - What other outputs might happen?
 - How might these impact other parts or interactions?
 - What **inputs** will be needed?
-

Strategic Thinking Intent: Focus on the people

Outcomes

		Self	Other
Actions	Self	Egocentric	Impact
	Other	Dependency	Altercentric

Nir Halevy. Strategic thinking and behavior during a pandemic.
Judgment and Decision Making, Vol. 15, No. 5, September 2020, pp. 648–659

3. Strategic Thinking Requires Thinking in Time

- **The future system evolves from the present.**
 - **The present system derives from the past.**
 - **The past and present constrain strategic intent.**
 - **Your vision of potential futures depends on your understanding of the past and present.**
-

Example, Thinking in Time: Kiribati Sea Level Rise

Past



-- [E. Weber. 2016. "Only a pawn in their games? environmental \(?\) migration in Kiribati – past, present and future," Die Erde 147:2, pp. 153-164, p. 154.](#)

Present



Source: [P. Plastrik. 2018. "Kiribati: 'We Might Be the First Nation to Disappear, But Not the Last,' in Life After Carbon \(April 27\).](#)

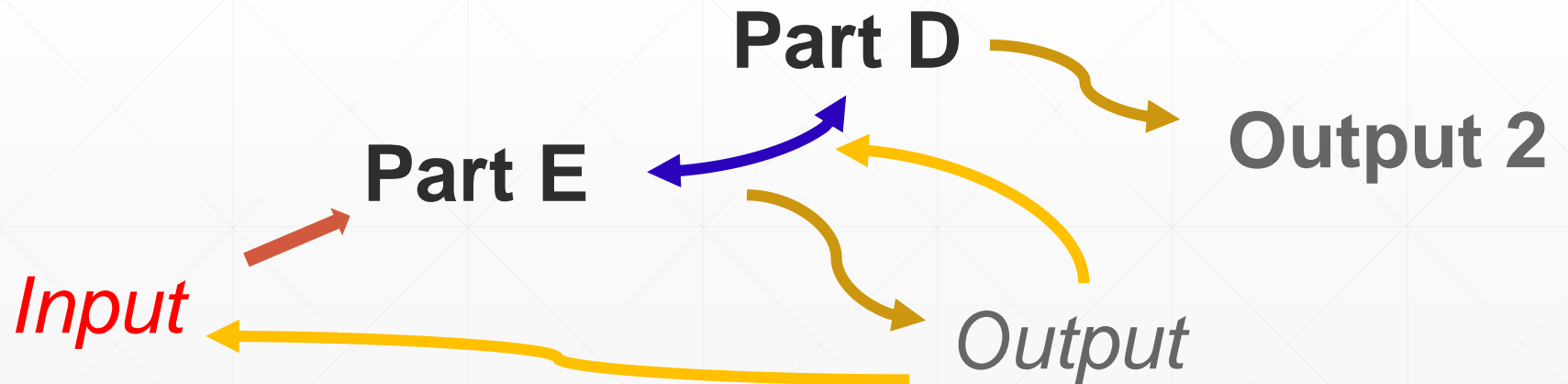
Example, Thinking in Time: Kiribati Future (?)



Source: [J. Ryall](#). 2013. [“Saving Kribati: a blueprint to rescue sinking state,”](#) in [The Telegraph](#) (Sep 14).

4. Strategic Thinking Is Hypothesis Driven

- **Form a hypothesis: “If X, then Y.”**
- **Cast a scenario to explore, “What if X?”**
- **Use system diagramming to explore second and third order consequences.**



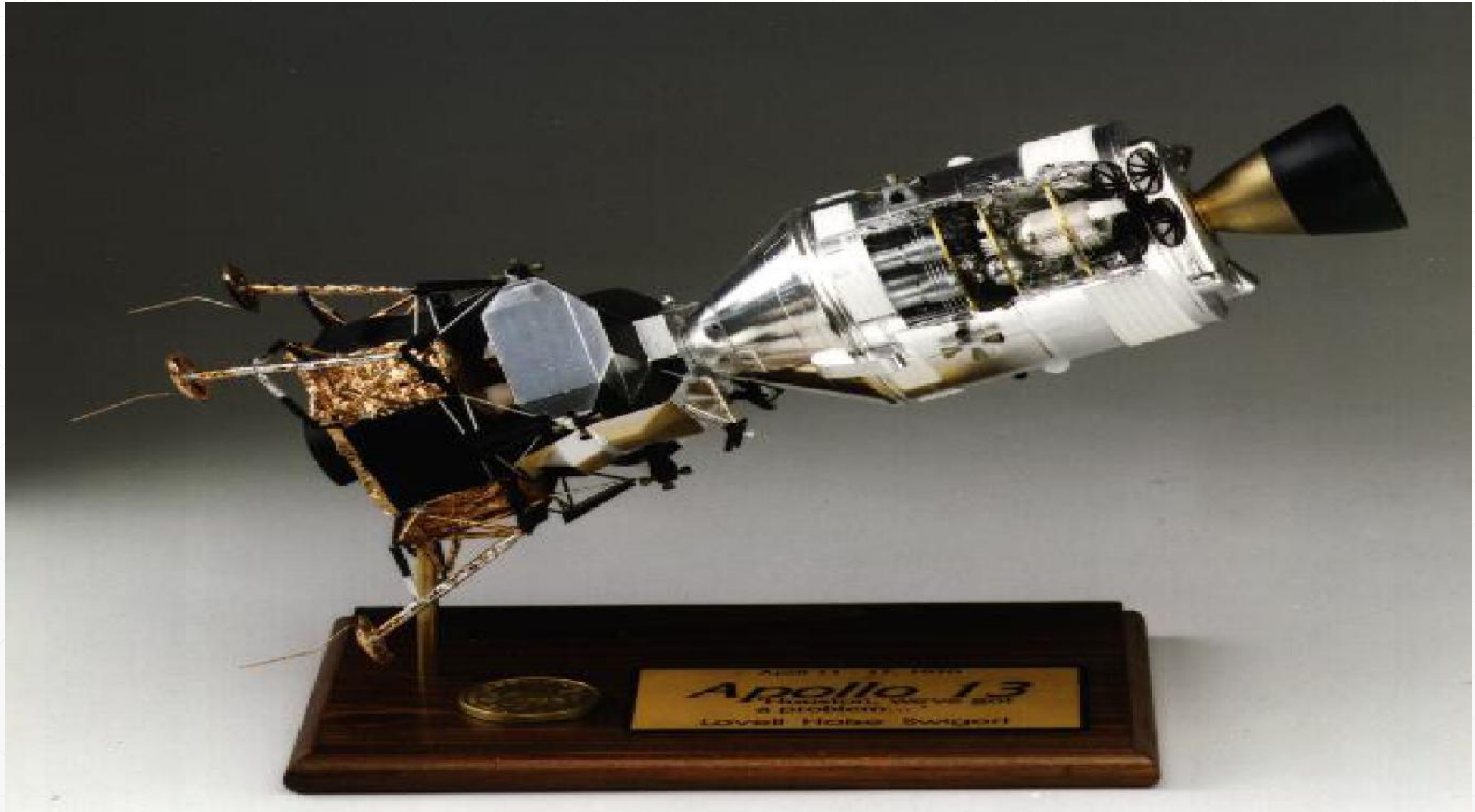
5. Strategic Thinking Employs Intelligent Opportunism

- Think not of prior intent, but **continuously develop** agendas of issues, aspirations, challenges, and individual intentions. – *Ralph Stacey in Liedtka, p. 123.*
 - Consistent with understanding and managing a complex, **dynamic**, and multi-minded system.
 - Another reason to encourage management team **diversity**.
-

Strategic Thinking and Intelligent Opportunism

- **Require melding both:**
 - **Convergent thinking – analysis, logic, & reasoning**
 - &**
 - **Divergent thinking – creative, generative, & innovative**
 - **Strengthened by team diversity – sex, age, background, experience, education, ...**
-

5. Intelligent Opportunism, Example: Apollo 13 Rescue



5. Intelligent Opportunism, Example: Apollo 13 Rescue

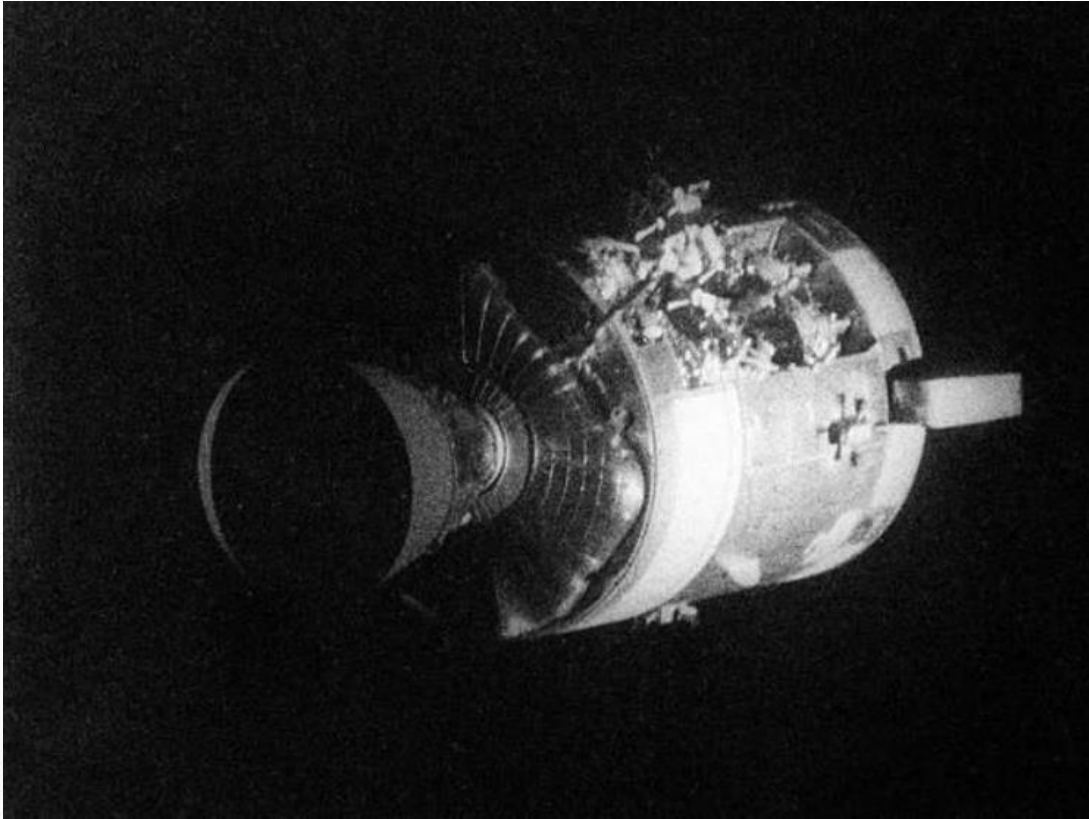


Image: NASA



Image: NASA in [Newsweek 13 April 2018](#)

Agenda

- What is strategic thinking?
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Crisis Management Demands Strategic Thinking

- In a crisis the *status quo* of a socio-environmental system has been disrupted.
 - An effective crisis manager must:
 - Comprehend the system – the parts and their interactions.
 - Understand connections between the present, the *status quo ante* (the past) and possible futures.
 - Formulate an intent – e.g., to restore, to mitigate, to adapt, to improve.
 - Be hypothesis driven – use scenarios to test “what if ... ?”
 - Take advantage of contextual factors or events that may arise.
 - Clearly communicate plans and actions.
-

Crisis Management: Strategic Thinking Skills

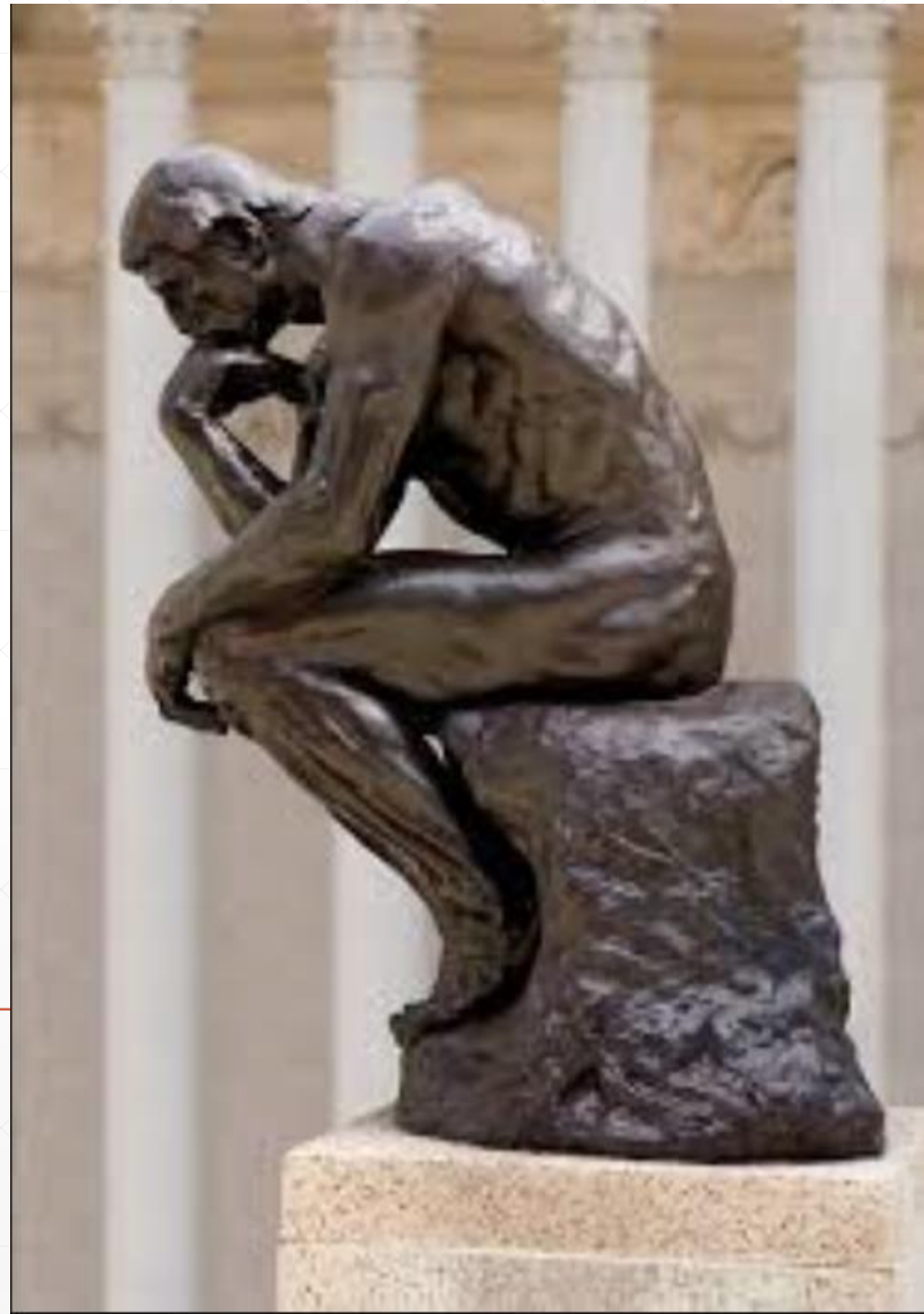
Strategic Thinking Skills	Description
Systems Thinking	Systems thinking refers to the leader's ability to see systems holistically by understanding the properties, forces, patterns and interrelationships that shape the behavior of the system, which hence provides options for action.
Reflection	Reflecting refers to the leader's ability to weave logical and rational thinking, through the use of perceptions, experience and information, to make judgments on what has happened, and creation of intuitive principles that guide future actions.
Reframing	Reframing refers to the leader's ability to switch attention across multiple perspectives, frames, mental models, and paradigms to generate new insights and options for actions.

Summary – How to Think Strategically

- Use a **systems approach** to identify and understand the problem.
 - **Clarify your intent** – What is your desired end state?
 - **Forecast possible scenarios** over time, considering the historical context and present state.
 - **Formulate hypotheses** (If...then) and test them against the system and scenarios.
 - **Be alert to opportunities** to influence or manage the system to achieve your intended outcome, recognizing and preparing for the possibilities of unintended outcomes.
-

Crisis Communications

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Senior Security Studies Course
17 May 2021



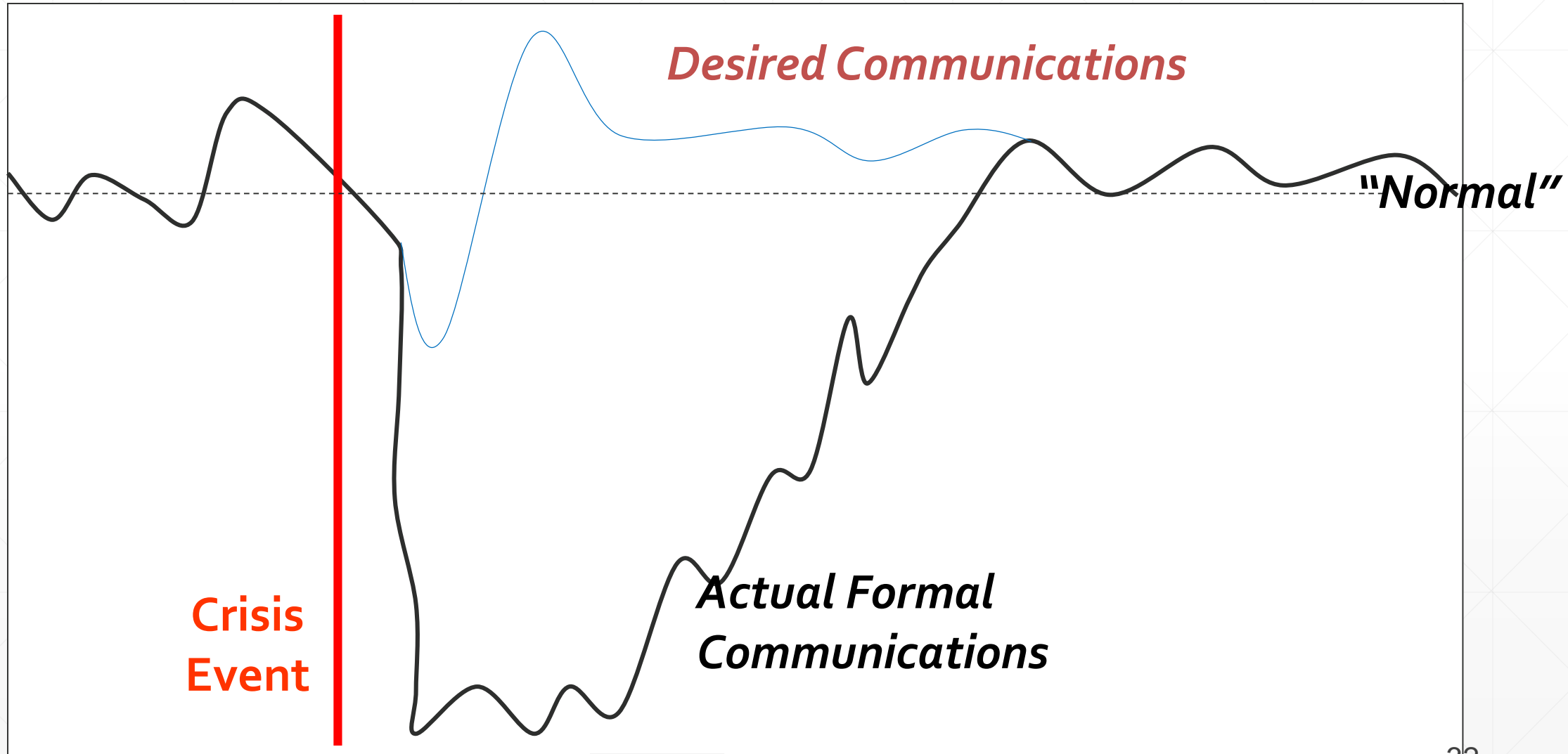
Why is it important?

“Ineffective communications is the primary contributor to project failure one third of the time, and had a negative impact on project success more than half the time.”

---Project Management Institute 2013 study

"Communication Gap"

Communications Intensity



**Crisis
Event**

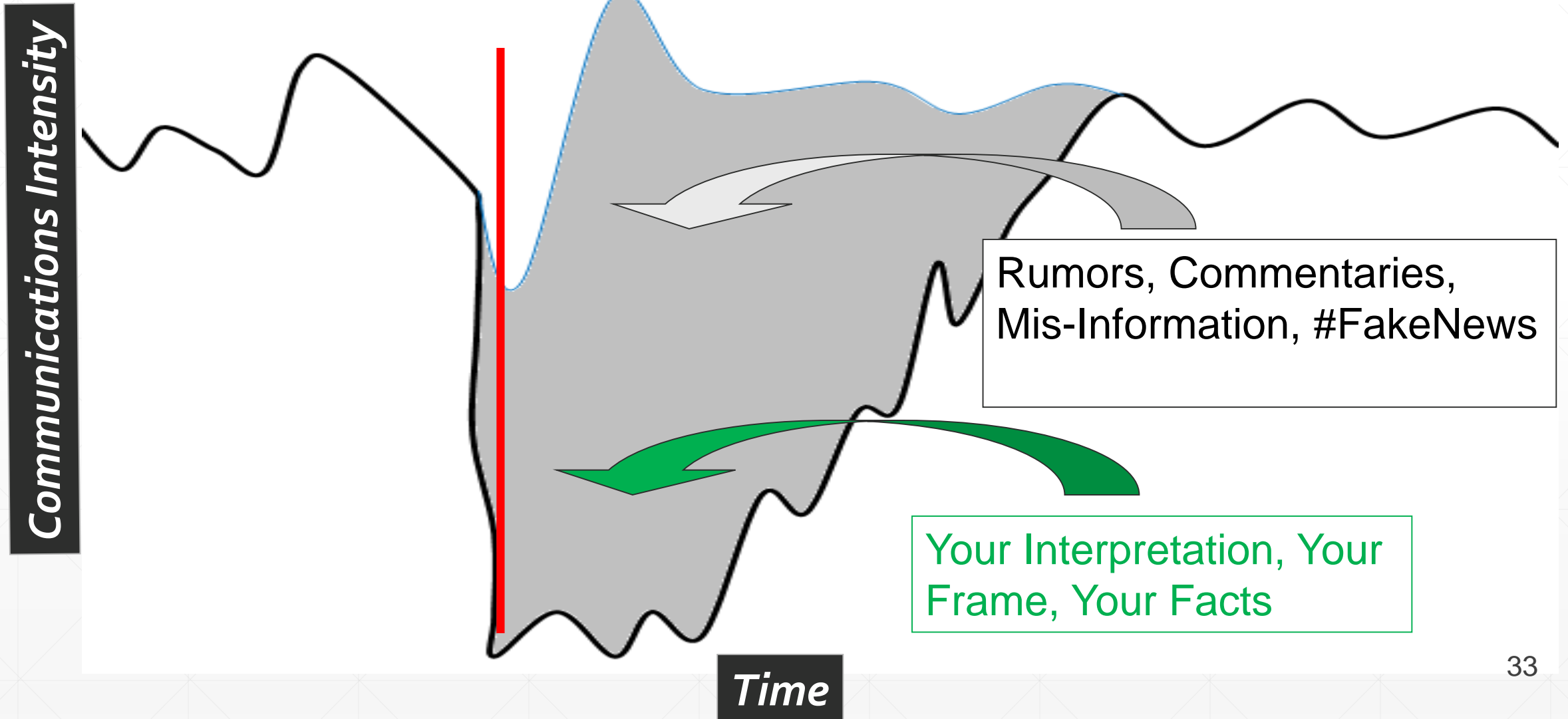
Desired Communications

"Normal"

*Actual Formal
Communications*

Time

Filling The "Communication Gap"



Principles for Crisis Communications

- **Speak First**
 - Speed is critical – minutes & hours matter
 - Provide as much information to the public about government response (within reason)



Oslo, Norway bombings



“An unanswered claim will always be presumed true.”

-- Cori Dauber, *Communications Professor & Author*

Principles for Crisis Communications

- **Clarify Later**
 - Follow-up with press conferences as needed.
 - Ensure all stakeholders are involved & on the same message.



Press conference with Hishammuddin Hussein following the disappearance of the Malaysia Airline MH370.

Principles for Crisis Communications

- **More things to remember:**
 - Acknowledge Uncertainty/
Don't over-reassure
 - Don't downplay an incident
 - Don't sell yourself as the only true expert on the case.



New Orleans city officials gather around Mayor Ray Nagin and Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco during a hurricane press conference at New Orleans City Hall, August 27, 2005.

“The condition most conducive to panic isn’t bad news; it is conflicting messages from those in authority.” – Barbara Reynolds, CDC spokesperson, 2002.

Principles for Crisis Communications

- **Don't lie** – the truth will eventually be revealed



Risk Communication: Key Concepts

When people are stressed and concerned, they typically:

- (1)...want to know that you care...before they care what you know
- (2)...have difficulty hearing, understanding, and remembering information
- (3)...trust most those willing to acknowledge the importance of uncertainty

Who is your audience?

- Who needs to receive or understand this information?
- Who are the influencers?
- Who are their influencers?
- How do they want to received information?
- Who do they want to receive it from?



Synchronize the Plan

- Interagency coordination to synchronize efforts.
- Coordinate strategic planning for both domestic and international audiences.



Responding to the Media

- Offer current facts & plan
- Respond to public mood
- Offer realistic assessment even while offering hope
- Be willing to speak from the heart



“You will have heard me say in the media that, yes, this is an event that has happened in Christchurch, that this has happened to our Muslim community. But you are us. So we feel deeply in our hearts what has happened to you. We feel grief. We feel injustice. We feel anger. And we share that with you.”

-- Jacinda Arden, New Zealand Prime Minister, March 16, 2019

Common Questions During a Crisis

- What happened?
- How does this affect...?
- Am I safe?
- How do I protect myself and my family?
- Who caused this?
- Can you fix it?
- Who is in charge?
- Has it stopped?
- Why did this happen?

From *77 Questions you'll be asked in a Crisis* – Dr Vincent Cavello.

<http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/communications/cerc/journalistquestions.doc>