

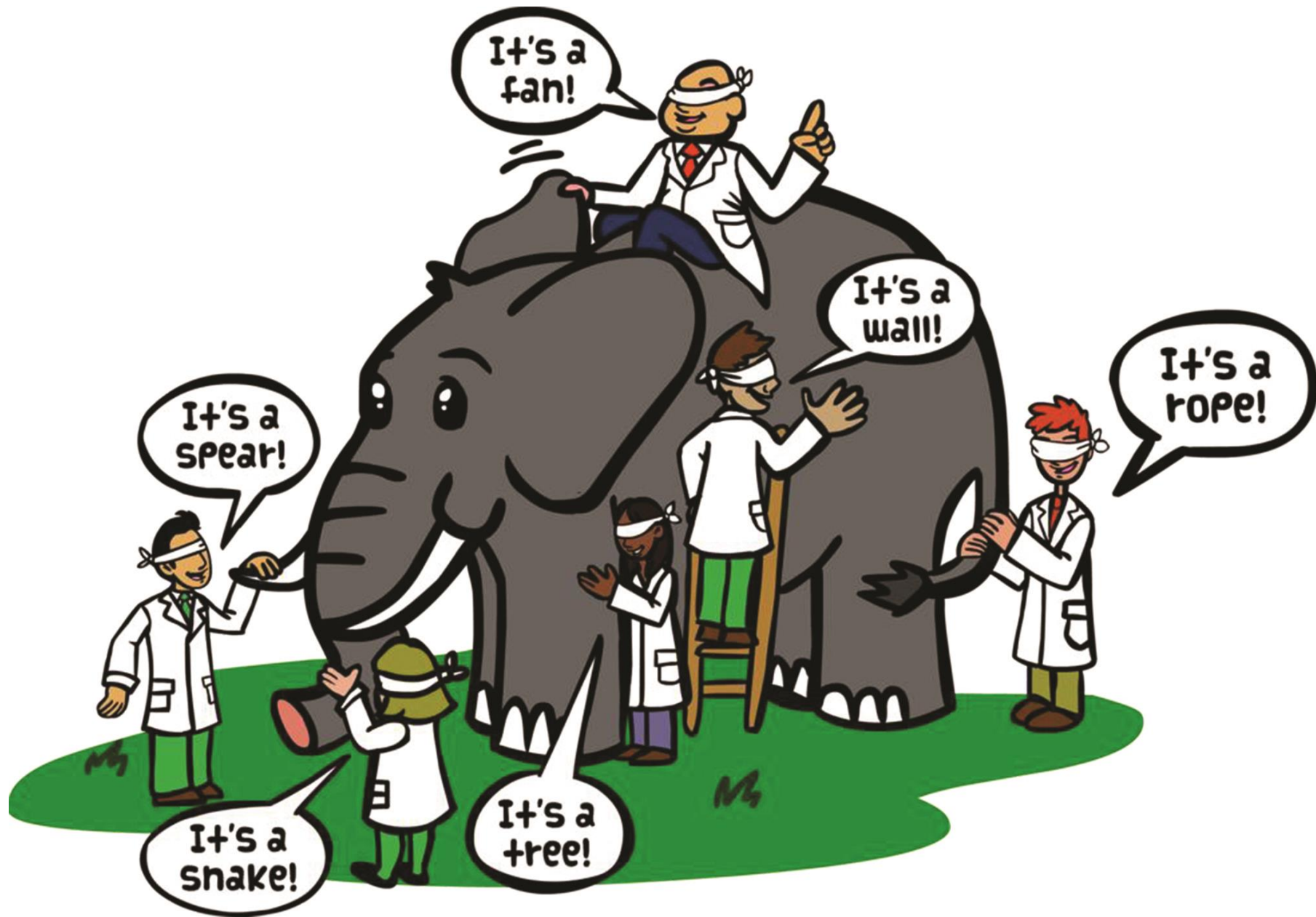
# Critical Thinking & Strategic Thinking

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SUCCESS

FAILURE



COOPERATION

COMPETITION

SUCCESS

FAILURE

COOPERATION

COMPETITION



All knowledge is  
about the **PAST**

All our decisions are about the **FUTURE**



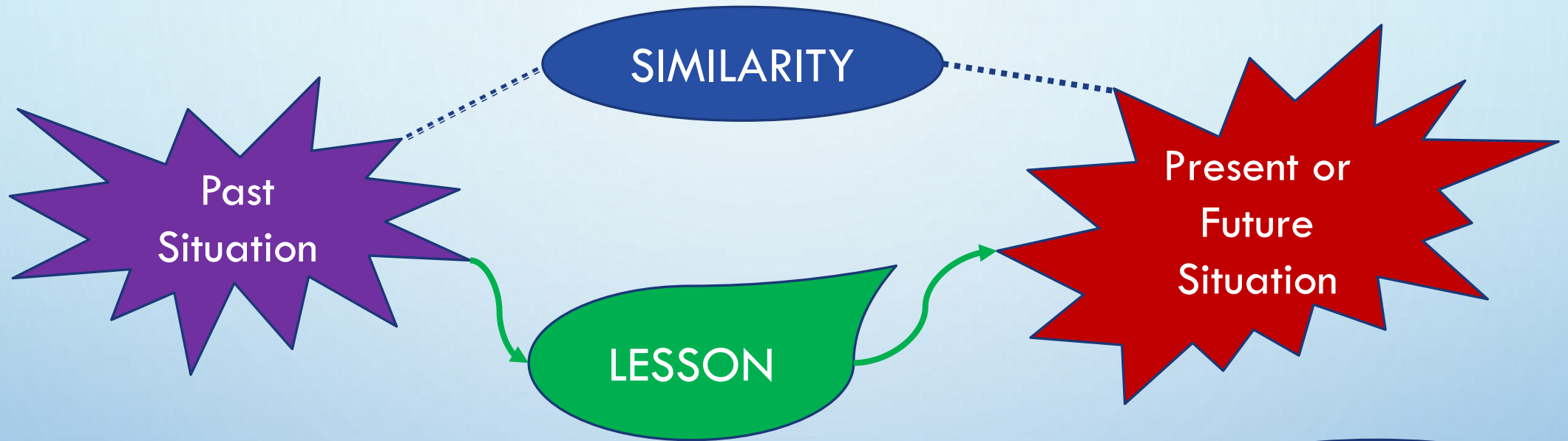
**The PRESENT**  
was once a future  
of the past

How do we step into the  
future?

We rely on our imagination

Which ultimately relies on  
lessons from the past.

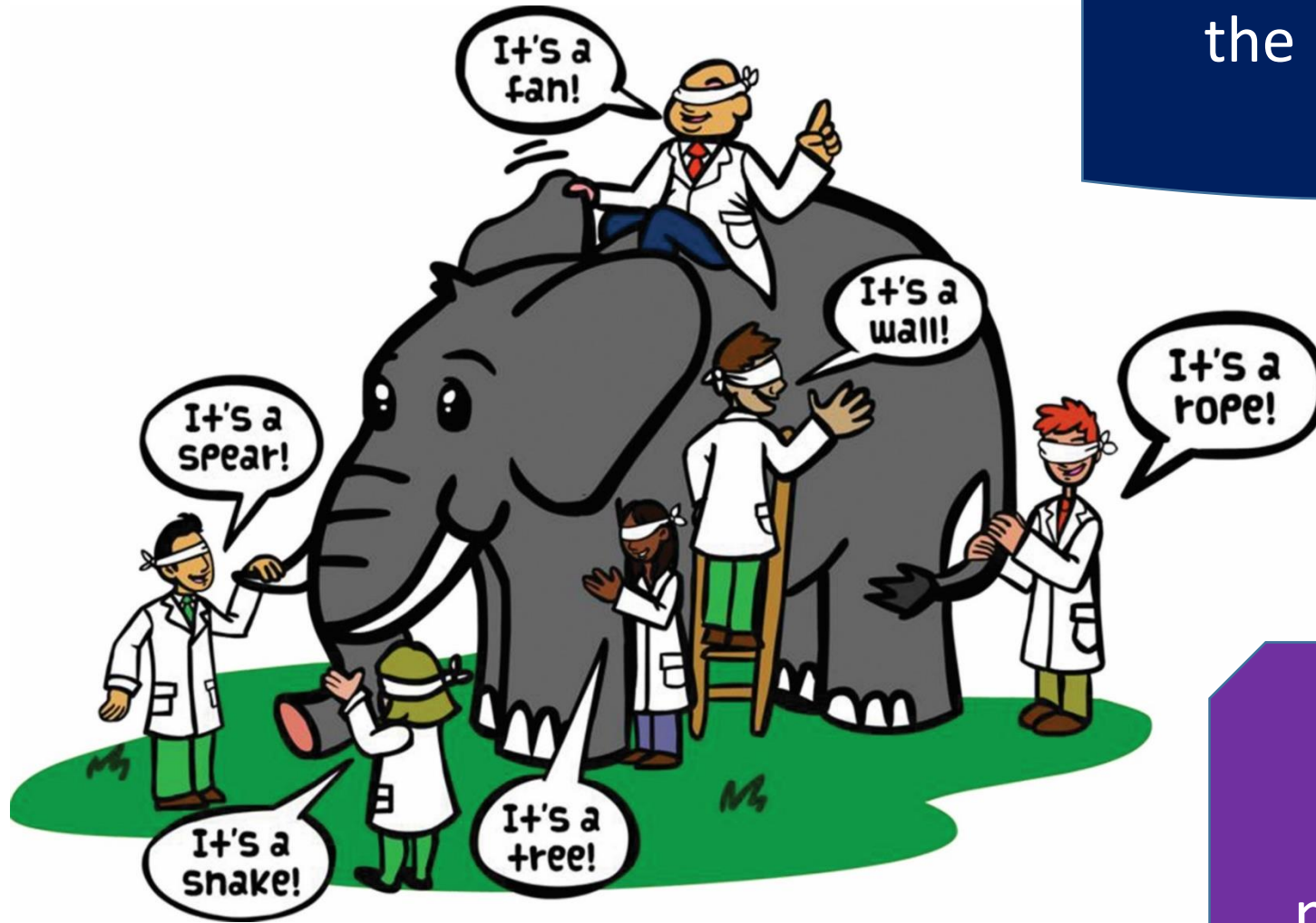
# HOW DO WE LEARN FROM THE PAST?



“Analogy is the core of cognition,  
the motor of thought.” – Douglas  
Hofstadter

Analogy is a double-  
edged sword.

Analogy is the core of cognition,  
the motor of thought, but...



Every picture has  
a frame – even  
the big picture.

Remedy:  
Look at things from  
many different angles.

A camera

Similarity at  
the surface  
level

Fish

It looks like ...



It works like ...

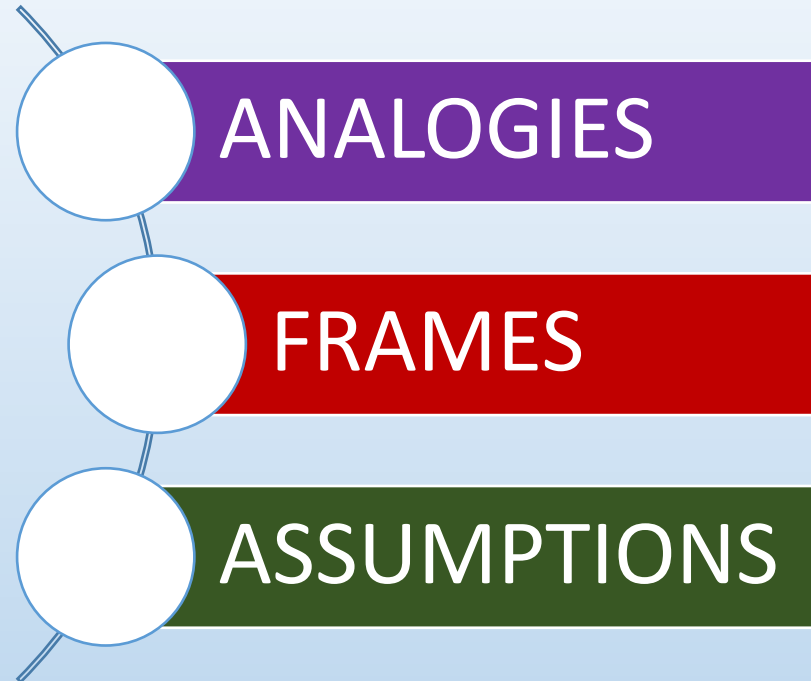


A computer

Similarity at  
the causal  
level

A mammal

# Beware of



They are necessary for our thinking. But they both enable and constrain our thinking.

# Critical Thinking Tools

- SWOT Analysis
- Debate: Pros + Cons
- Red Teaming
- Illeism
- Questioning Your Assumptions
- Argument Mapping
- Facts vs Opinions
- The Six Thinking Hats

# SWOT Analysis



# Debate the Pros and Cons



# Red Teaming

- The practice of rigorously challenging your plans, policies, systems, and assumptions by adopting an adversarial approach.



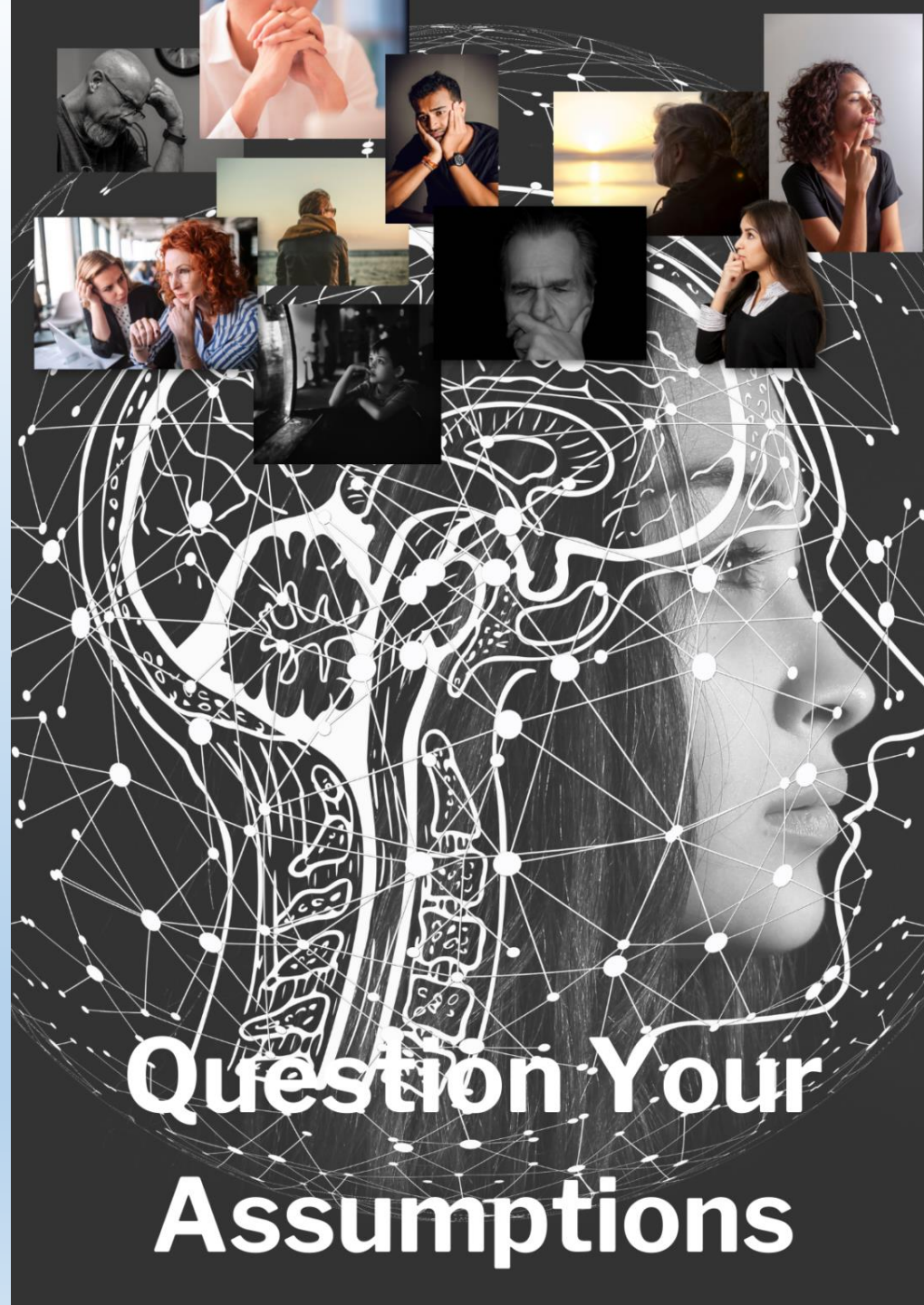
Put yourself in the shoes  
of your enemy

# Illeism



- Talking about yourself, your own plans, etc. from a **third-person perspective**

Every idea is based on some assumptions. (This one included.)



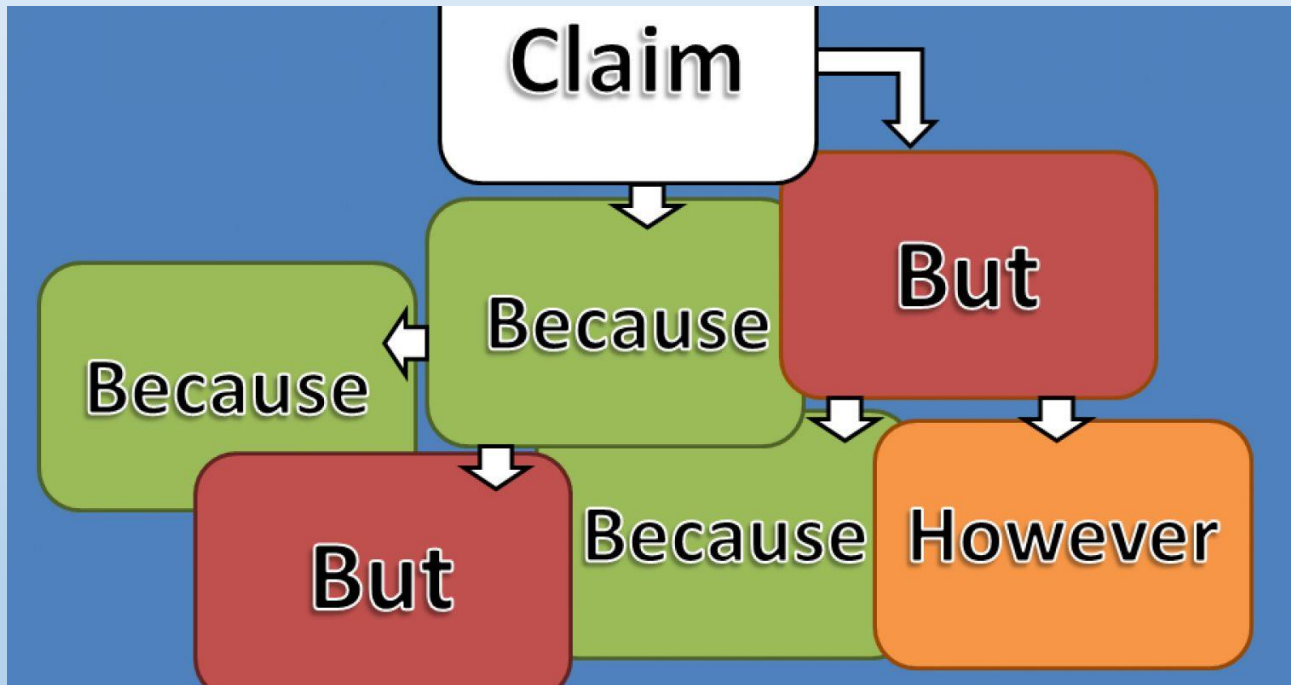
# Question Your Assumptions

Assumptions are the conditions for the possibility of your arguments.

Questions:

- What are your underlying assumptions?
- Which assumptions may be changed?
- What if an assumption is changed?

# Argument Mapping



Visual representation of the structure of an argument, using diagrams that show the

- Premises (assumptions),
- Conclusion,
- Reasoning (inference), incl.
  - Claims,
  - Evidence,
  - Concepts, and
  - Objections.

# FACTS

*Tell us what happened  
and can be proven  
true or false.*



# OPINIONS

*Are attitudes or  
judgements that can't  
be proven right or wrong.*

Enemies of Clear Thinking

## Facts vs. Opinions

### Wishful Thinker

There is no such thing as facts, just beliefs.

My opinion is a fact.

### Critical Thinker

Facts are not opinions.

Facts are the same for everyone.

# Edward de Bono Six Thinking Hats®

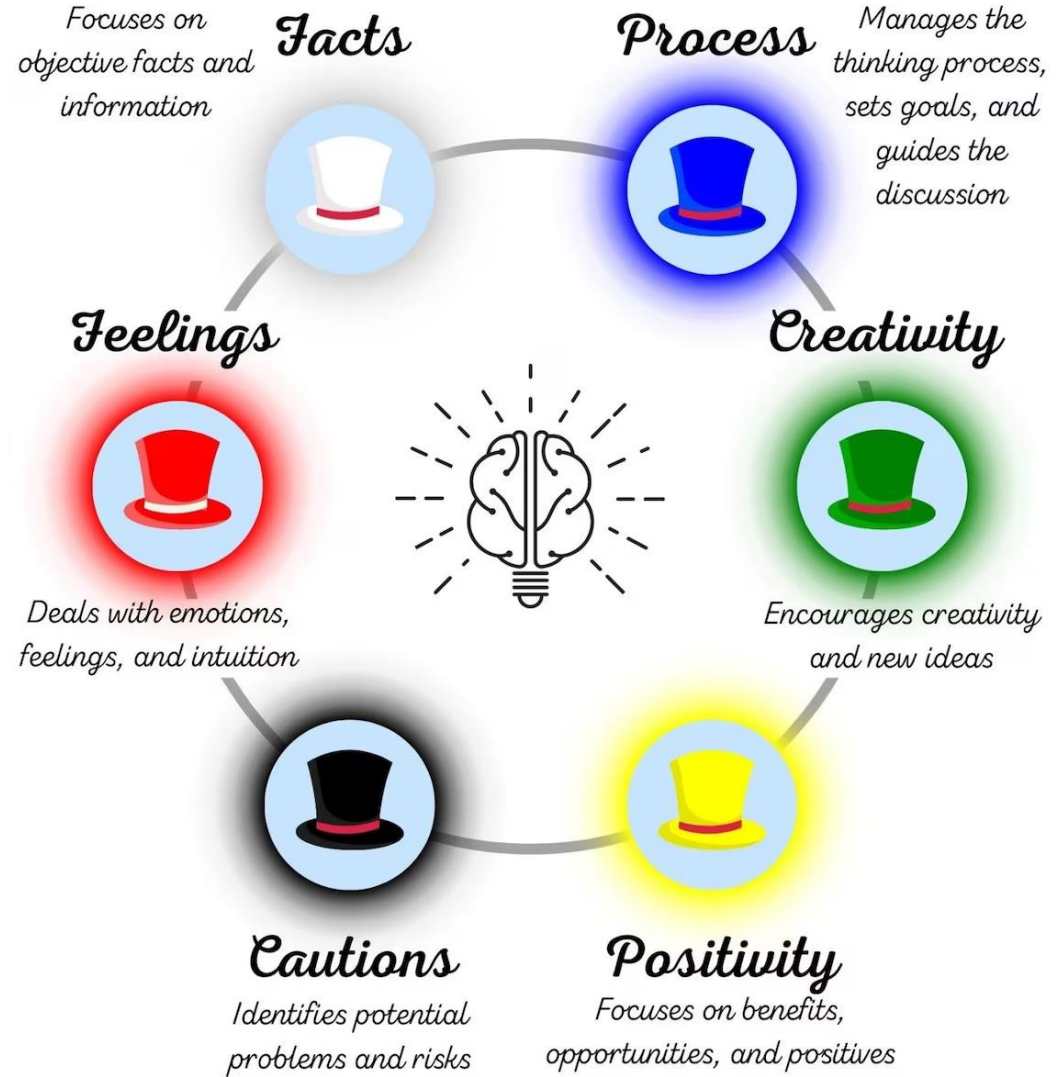


"We owe de Bono a debt for constantly reminding us that thinking is a skill and can be improved." *Psychology Today*

THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER  
REVISED AND UPDATED



## Six Thinking Hats



# What Is Strategic Thinking? (1)

<b>TACTICAL THINKING</b>	<b>STRATEGIC THINKING</b>
Doing Things Right	Doing the Right Things
Short-term Actions	Long-term Vision
Seeing the Trees	Seeing the Forest
Focusing on the Plan	Scanning the Horizon for Future Trends
Thinking Sequentially	Thinking Holistically
Precise Decision-making	Agile Decision-making

# What Is Strategic Thinking? (2)

STRATEGIC PLANNING	STRATEGIC THINKING
Blueprint	Direction
How	What & When
Gives Voice, Action, Structure	Informs
Analysis of Data	Synthesis of Data

# Strategy Is Not a Plan, Not Even a Master Plan

No plan survives first  
contact with the enemy.  
(Helmuth von Moltke)

Strategy is a Process,  
a Framework, and an  
Ecosystem

“The best generals are  
those who arrive at the  
results of planning without  
being tied to plans.”  
(Winston Churchill)

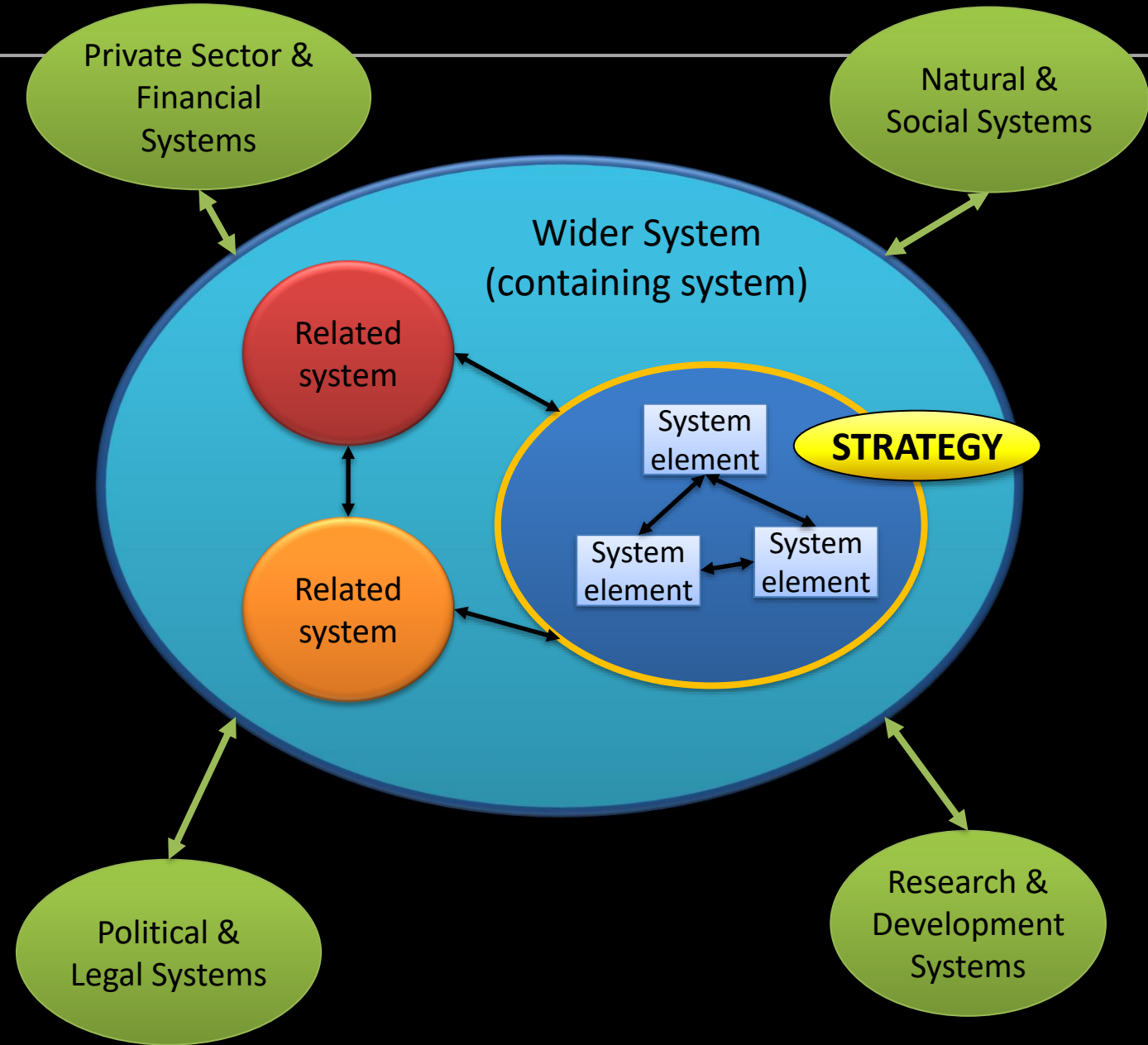
Strategy is

The process of maintaining a balance between **ends, ways, and means**.

The framework that provides a coherent view of the world and a **logic for making choices** and prioritizing.

# Strategy as an Ecosystem

- Strategy creates its own ecosystem: Its team, allies, partners, stakeholders, etc.
- Strategy operates within other systems and must behave accordingly by adapting to them.



# The VUCA world

The background of the slide is a vibrant, abstract composition of numerous colorful paint splatters and blotches. The colors include red, yellow, green, blue, purple, and black, scattered across a light background, creating a sense of dynamic movement and complexity.

**V**olatile: change goes up and down affecting dimensions of life

**U**ncertain: hard to predict outcomes

**C**omplex: multiple driving forces affecting each other – no single root cause

**A**mbiguous: lack of clear meaning

# In a VUCA environment:

Challenges may be **uncertain** and unknowable

No single 'root cause', just **key factors**

The **challenge** is part of the system

**You** are part of the system

Your **opposition** is part of the system

**Like it or not, we are all systems thinkers**

**It is better to be a good thinker than a bad one**



# Key Features of a VUCA Environment

- Open system → Dynamic → **Continual Change**
  - 1<sup>st</sup>-order, 2<sup>nd</sup>-order, 3<sup>rd</sup>-order, ..., n<sup>th</sup>-order effects → Non-linearity
- **Multi-mindedness** → Agency of the “weak” and the “small” also matters
  - People’ agency reflects their ambitions, historical experiences, and societal dynamics
- **Interdependence:**
  - Symmetric: Ties that bind
  - Asymmetric: Can be used as a leverage

# Strategic Thinking in a VUCA Environment

- The art of getting what you want, knowing that
  - others are also trying to get what they want,
  - the environment is continually changing, and
  - almost everything and everyone is interdependent.

A multidimensional mindset  
with 7 critical dimensions

# Key Dimensions of Strategic Thinking

- **Persist** with an ultimate end but be **flexible** in terms of the ways, means, and intermediate goals to achieve the end
- Always keep the **big picture** in mind
- Take the **long view**
- Embrace **systems** thinking
- Espouse **critical** thinking
- Be **creative**
- Be highly **adaptive**

# Case Study #1: China's strategy in SCS: The goal and its challenges

- **Goal** is to gain control of SCS
  - “Lost territories”, “national shame”
  - “First island chain”
  - Resources
- **Challenges:**
  - Stronger rival (US)
  - Large number of rivals
  - Main trade routes



# China's strategy in the SCS

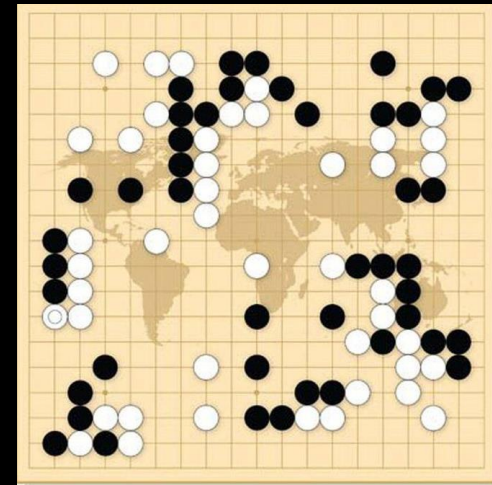


- **End:** Gain dominance/control of SCS
- **Ways:** Gradually **shift the propensity of things** (勢 *shi*) in favor of Chinese dominance through **opportunistic** and **“gray-zone” expansion** rather than major battles



圍棋 (*weiqi*, game of encirclement), fill in a vacuum, salami slicing, people's war at sea, “cabbage” (military, law enforcement, militia)

- **Means:** Everything can be weaponized (e.g., “three warfares”: media, psycho, law)



# Four Imperatives of PRC Strategy in SCS

1. **Avoid war.** Initiate clashes only to **exploit favorable circumstances.**
2. Control the most **strategically located territories.** Seize them stealthily if possible, in limited conflict if necessary.
3. Develop them into **hubs of logistics, forward and staging bases,** from which to dominate the waters and skies of the SCS.
4. Spread a **narrative** of China's **historical rights** in the SCS and China being **reactive** to, but **fearless** of, others' provocations.

# Case Study #2: Russian Invasion of Ukraine

*Assumptions underlying Russia's war decision:*

- Ukrainian resistance will crumble under Russia's overwhelming force.
- Western responses will stay weak as in 2014 (when Russia annexed Crimea and intervened militarily in the Donbas).
- Russia's fait accompli will create a "new normal".

## But Reality Shows Otherwise

- Ukrainian resistance is very strong.
- Western responses are very strong.
- Russian fait accompli is impossible.
- The conflict may last for years, even decades.
- And the future of Russia is ...

# Some Lessons

- Don't underestimate the agency of the “weak” or “small”.
- Non-linearity (others' responses to your actions).
- Think about the higher-order effects of your action.
- Question your own beliefs & assumptions.
- Take the long view.
- Don't confuse your intermediate goals with the ultimate ends.

# How to Think Strategically

