

made sense. So, how do I choose? Should I choose? Why here over there? I was still lost.

I started to think about how we had made past decisions. In our board meetings, the way we decided upon action was to look at different proposals, the financial state of the company and decide whether a set of actions fitted in with our purpose, one which admittedly was a compromise of past decisions. The chess equivalent of “my purpose is we’re here” and “will this move bring immediate benefits”. Unlike the game, we had no chessboard for business nor any long term play. The more I examined this, the more I realized that our choice was often based upon gut feel and opinion though we had created arcane language to justify our haphazard actions — this project was “core” and another lacked a reasonable ROI (return on investment). This didn’t feel right and there was no pattern of learning that I could distinguish.

I became convinced that whilst we had a purpose of sorts, we had no real direction nor any mechanism of learning nor any means to determine the why of movement which is at the heart of strategy. We were successful in that we stumbled from one opportunity to another but we could just as easily be walking further out to sea as much as crossing the river.

I started to think that maybe it didn’t matter but I continued to pursue this line of enquiry. Since Sun Tzu had principally written about military combat, I started diving into military history in the hope of finding other lessons. I became obsessively fascinated by the extensive