

THE COOPER UNION ALUMNI & PIONEER

See the Whole Board (rev 2)

by Barry Drogin, EE '83

Abstract

The author portrays the reinvention strategy gambit, the hybrid framework stratagem, the Way Forward offense and the mission statement defense as chess tactics and indicates that the game has been slowed down, with the austerity budget starting in FY 2013, a possible mission statement change in FY 2014, and the threat to abandon the mission statement altogether delayed until FY 2015. Unfortunately, the Chrysler Building doesn't kick in that additional \$20 million per year until FY 2018.

For six months, Dr. Jamshed Bharucha, allied with the Board of Trustees, and *The Alumni Pioneer* (AP), allied with Friends of Cooper Union (FOCU) and the Cooper Union Task Force, have been engaged in a strange chess game. It's a strange game because we not only move the pieces, we are amongst the pieces themselves. It is stranger because, although we are the players, we did not make the rules, and there are others who not only enforce the rules but could even change them.

The way chess works, the players start with their pieces in a beginning configuration, and then each player moves their pieces around into differing configurations and, according to the rules of the game, there might be a somewhat objective way of judging whether one person's configuration has a better or worse chance of winning than the other's. The game is over when one person's configuration traps the other person's configuration into a checkmate from which there is no escape. That's different from destroying the chess set so that no one can play ever again. That's very bad.

The game can end in a stalemate, where neither player can be seen as having won over the other. FOCU and AP would like a king that follows the mission statement. Dr. Bharucha would like a king that follows the reinvention strategy. The Board of Trustees – well, some can resign, some can just keep playing the game, some can brag about how they are doing. Some even enjoy playing several games at once at different not-for-profit institutions – playing chess is their thing. Go figure.

The Board of Trustees is the king. The metaphor may be a little confusing for some, because we know that, in regular chess, there are two kings, one for each player. You could think of the Board of Trustees as 24 people, and the strength of the position of each of our kings as the number of trustees that support the mission statement vs. the number of trustees who support the reinvention strategy. I emphasized the concept of the configuration, not the conventional view of chess as a war between armies where pieces are eliminated and removed from the playing field. If you insist on being literal with the chess metaphor, you could say that when pieces are removed from one side but not the other, that means that one side can no longer use those pieces as part of his configuration. They are removed from the game and can no longer be played with.

The President is the queen. As we all know, the queen can be sacrificed, and that's a very big move. The queen appears to be the most powerful piece in the game, but it depends on the configuration. The queen's purpose, like all of the other pieces, is to serve and protect the king, but what we really mean is the configuration that the king is in. There can be times when the king has been castled and really doesn't appear to be involved much in

the action of the game. To the extent that Bharucha is forced to support the mission statement of the college, FOCU and AP have a queen, also.

AP is one of the knights. Perhaps The Cooper Pioneer is the other knight. We can leap across the board in strange ways, jumping into the middle of configurations and jumping back out just as easily. Maybe Bharucha tricks me into publishing something that advances the reinvention strategy, in which case he has a knight, also. Same with The Cooper Pioneer.

I guess the employees and students of The Cooper Union are the pawns. That's administrative staff, faculty, academic support staff, students of all three schools. They only move in one direction – collecting salaries or accumulating knowledge in the game that is academia. They can threaten each other and the other pieces in the game, or they can just keep moving forward, collecting their salaries and knowledge. We know that there are some administrative staff pawns, like the public relations office, which are working very hard to support the reinvention strategy.

I guess the castles are the endowment. One castle is real estate, the other is cash. I started playing this game way before Dr. Bharucha did; I was there back in 1979 when the real estate and cash were about equal. I kept my eye on the game for a few years, but only started playing again in 2011, just like Dr. Bharucha. I guess the king is happiest when he is castled with the cash, and the real estate is way over on the other side of the board doing its thing, paying rent and PILOT. To the extent that Bharucha uses the endowment to pay for his reinvention strategy, he has castles.

Finally, the bishops are the alumni or, perhaps because there are two bishops, one bishop is the alumni, and the other bishop is rich folk and foundations, which are kind of the same thing. *The Alumni Pioneer* produced this swell infographic, compiled from confidential sources, which showed that alumni giving was about equal to that of rich folk and foundations, although we completely dominate the annual fund (rich folk and foundations don't care much about the annual fund), but if you look at the whole, both the annual fund and the capital campaign, then its about 50-50, with government grants taking up the rest. Obviously, there are a lot of alumni who support the mission statement, and there are some rich folk who like Bharucha.

So Dr. Bharucha and I started this game while it was already in progress. One of the castles, cash, had dropped in strength to only a third of the other castle, real estate, and threatened to end the game completely so that no future games could be played, none of the pawns could move forward anymore and this particular chess set would be unusable. A lot of people kept asking questions about how the game had gotten to this configuration; some of the important moves and configurations are known now, but it really wasn't that relevant to the playing of the game. In chess jargon, these pieces were already developed.

So Queen Bharucha came to The Cooper Union with a radical gambit that no one had ever used before, the reinvention strategy. It had four components: access, globalization, the deployment of technology and design, and entrepreneurial activity. Of course, no moves had been made yet. I didn't come to the game with the full-tuition scholarship – I actually wanted a free education, meaning one with no tuition *and* no student fees. I had been off of the board for a while, but some pawn, the Engineering Student Council, got to the other side and decided to become a bishop, not knowing that I was actually a knight. I'd played this game before as the other knight, gotten a Tau Beta Pi Laureate Award for it, been aligned with the alumni bishop (but always wanted to work again with the other knight). I got a glimpse of the reinvention strategy, the gambit Queen Bharucha intended on using, and got back on my trusty steed, hoping I wouldn't end up like Don Quixote.

Since Queen Bharucha moved first, and it was such a radical gambit, I was caught a bit off guard. Of course, I caught him off guard because he didn't even know there was a second knight. Queen Campbell had put the alumni bishop into a very weak position, and Queen Bharucha assumed I was an alumni bishop. But, you

know, it was late in the game, and one of the pawns had gotten across the board, and certain responses to gambits, classic or not, can present themselves.

One of the responses was the FOCU community summit, which, enabled technologically by the Cooper Union Task Force, is a strong offense. It kicked off a stakeholder process that is well-respected in the rules of chess. AP dubbed the alumni bishops who founded FOCU and the Cooper Union Task Force the Gang of Six, and various pieces who realized the first community summit as Rescue Heroes. Queen Bharucha responded with announcement of his own stakeholder process – you’ll see how well that turned out for him. But we needed a strong defense, as well.

Over the holiday break, AP discovered that Queen Bharucha was trying very hard to prevent the mission statement defense, which was a big threat to the reinvention strategy. AP jumped over there to Queen Bharucha’s distress. AP brought in the alumni bishop and some well-placed pawns. The mission statement defense was real trouble for the reinvention strategy gambit.

You see, one of the rulemakers in this game of chess is the Middle States Association. I think many 21st century queens wish the MSA and other accreditation bodies would go away. They learned how to use the HEPI to fool the MSA into thinking they were doing okay when, in fact, things were spiralling out of control. The HEPI has knocked many student pawns off of many chess sets, advanced administrative pawns over faculty pawns, and saddled young alumni bishops with staggering debt. It’s gotten to the point where many people are questioning whether student pawns even need to play chess.

It is not illegal to change a mission statement, but doing so can violate other rulemakers such as the Attorney General. Theoretically, even the IRS, through Form 990’s, has an interest in the mission statement, which affects the rich people and foundation bishop. Soon enough your castles are captured and the game is over.

Turns out the reinvention strategy gambit is so radical, it even brings the NYS Board of Regents rulemakers into play.

Due to our proper use of the mission statement defense, Queen Bharucha has modified the reinvention strategy gambit and replaced it with the hybrid framework stratagem. It would appear to some that he controls the Board of Trustees, but the hybrid framework stratagem belies that argument. In order to implement it, he had to place the CUAA President against the unanimous decision of his own Alumni Council. He also had to pre-empt his own stakeholder process, which weakens, if not destroys, its credibility.

Unlike the reinvention strategy, which was kind of a blitzkrieg, the hybrid framework is much slower and takes a lot more moves. The reinvention strategy was devoted to growth and never even made mention of austerity and HEPI. In FY 2013, some administrative pawns will be sacrificed. My constant refrain is why this wasn’t done in FY 2009 by Queen Campbell (as promised to the alumni bishops), or in FY 2012, which illustrates a difference between the reinvention strategy and the hybrid framework. It isn’t until FY 2014 that some graduate student pawns may be affected, and that’s assuming the NYS Board of Regents and the Board of Trustees approve. The MSA prefers a stakeholder process for changes to the mission statement, and it is unclear that they will be fooled by the stakeholder process that Queen Bharucha used. The reinvention strategy in the Cooper chess game starts with graduate programs that are not accredited – so what do you end up with, one mission statement for the accredited undergraduate program and a completely different mission statement for the unaccredited graduate program? There is talk of setting school against school, and letting bishops give to the school of their choice. Should the accredited and unaccredited programs be separate 501(c)3 corporations, so that bishops can give to the mission statement of their choice? Perhaps the unaccredited programs aren’t even 501(c)3 corporations, but for-profit corporations. What will the Attorney General and the NYS Board of Regents think about that?

The cash castle protecting the Board of Trustees king is reliant on bishops, and Queen Bharucha has to get the bishops to stay by the castle. He needs a defense, not just an offense. Queen Bharucha knows he can be sacrificed. He keeps using the public relations pawn in an *en passant* move, changing the website to modify the past to suit his needs. Since many people aren't even aware of the *en passant* move, let alone understand when it can and can't be used, he seems to get away with it, but that's dangerous, especially playing against *this* knight.

Meanwhile, the mission statement defense will be in place through at least FY 2014. That's another change in the reinvention strategy and the lynchpin of the hybrid framework.

Unfortunately, FY 2018 is some way off. That's when there's a huge boost in the strength of the real estate castle.

Although Queen Bharucha pre-empted media coverage of FOCU's last move in The Way Forward offense, he hasn't destroyed it, and he told some student pawns he liked a lot of it. That means we have a chance of capturing the queen and check-mating the king. Dr. Bharucha really wants his cross-disciplinary graduate program. With proper negotiations, we could give him his graduate program but eliminate its revenue-generating aspect, thus preserving the mission statement. Unfortunately, Dr. Bharucha also has global ambitions, and not of the Toby Cumberbach sort. An alliance with a foreign college would not be a preservation of the Cooper ideal unless the foreign college, too, was a full-tuition scholarship institution. It would be a wonderful expansion of the Cooper brand to export the concept of free higher education throughout the world, with expanded philanthropic support. MIT already provides free on-line access to its education. Is for-pay education a required component of Dr. Bharucha's educational philosophy?

So let's review – some version of the austerity budget, which should have been in place in FY 2009, will be in place in FY 2013. If the NYS Board of Regents agrees and the Board of Trustees relents, some form of mission statement change may be in place in FY 2014. And there is the threat that the mission statement will be dismantled altogether in FY 2015. This is all assuming that Queen Bharucha makes it to FY 2013, 2014, and 2015.

Rather than feeling the game is over or that quick moves are needed before FY 2013, it appears the game has slowed down some. Plenty of time for moves to prevent the reinvention strategy, no?

This is why *The Alumni Pioneer* initially labeled the announcement of the hybrid framework as a pre-emptive surrender. See the whole board.

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