

Chapter 6 - S.W.O.T. Analysis

The themes we've explored in this book thus far provided the what, where, when and why of fighting. This chapter integrates those ideas and reaches their logical culmination in a technique widely applied in business management, known by its acronym of SWOT analysis, which enables the establishment of a rational and appropriate action plan.

In Go, SWOT analysis begins with a global board evaluation of the importance and relative strength of the opposing groups prior to each move, just as we've done in the preceding chapters. Then we add to that an appraisal of our own aggressive potential, together with the converse appraisal of where the opponent can do us damage. The result is **a global evaluation of each side's:**

S = Strengths
W = Weaknesses
O = Opportunities
T = Threats

This basic analysis is then augmented with an appraisal of how each side stands in terms of:

- **Settled territory.**
- **Territorial potential.**

The combination of these factors then allows the creation of an appropriate action plan, specifying (to the extent feasible):

- **The main focus of play in the current position.**
- **The most urgent immediate task for the player with Sente.**
- **What (s)he should do to achieve that goal.**
- **The opponent's expected response.**

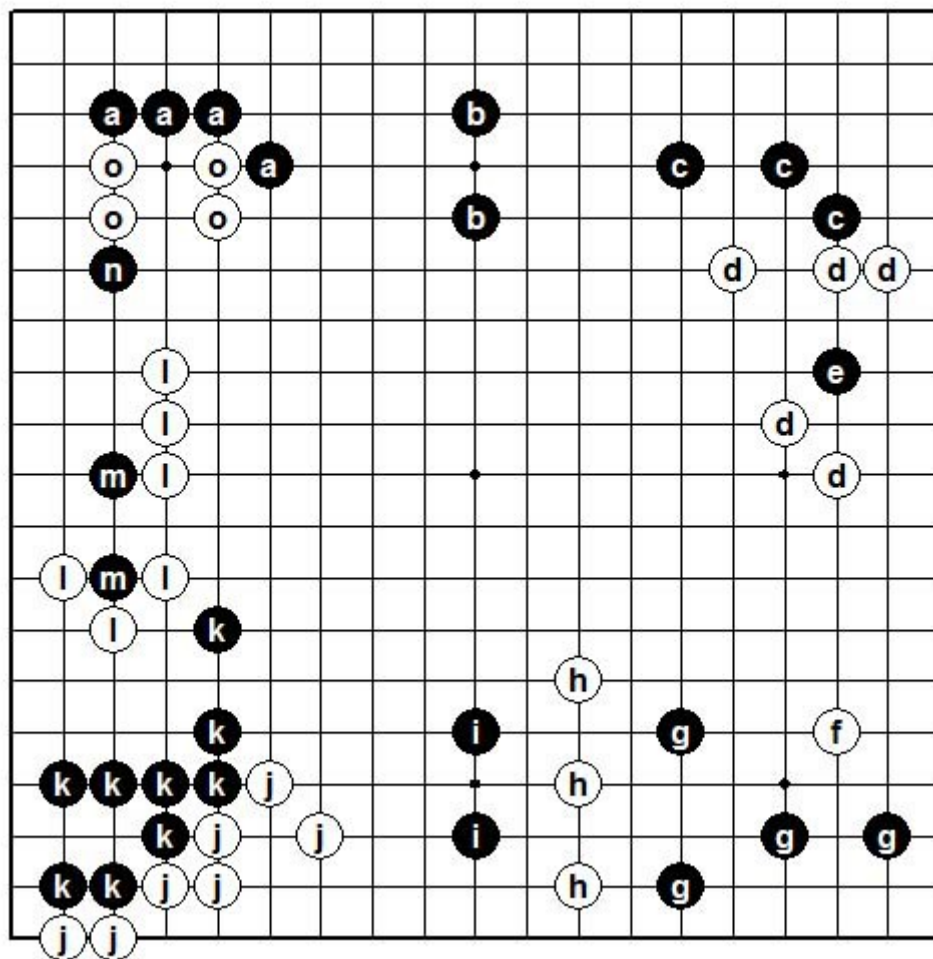
When properly completed and updated move-by-move, this global assessment and action plan provides the road map that guides both sides throughout the game!

CAUTION! Even if the SWOT analysis is perfectly performed (no mean feat in many positions for less than strong players), finding the best moves to exploit that appraisal will frequently require both tactical and strategic skill well beyond players at the level for which this book is intended. But please don't be discouraged by this, because it's only a technical detail which will eventually be self correcting as

your knowledge and skill improve with increasing experience.

Until that high level of competence is finally attained, the result of applying a SWOT analysis may “only” be that you identify the right objectives, even if you don’t always find the very best moves to implement them! So, at worst, any resulting lack of success won’t be because you overlooked some important element of the position!

Now let’s revisit the position we examined earlier in Chapter 2, Diagram 2, and see how the more comprehensive SWOT analysis enables sharpening focus beyond the simple (but essential!) identification of strong and weak stones to produce an appropriate action plan.



Territorial Potential:

- Almost, but not yet complete control of the entire upper side (because of the gaps between the “a”, “b”, and “c” groups, and the still open 3-3 point in the upper right corner.) which could easily total 50+ points if fully realized.
- 10+ points in the lower right corner.

Diagram 1 The SWOT analysis of this position is as follows:

Black:

Strengths:

- The upper side is very strong, but the “b” stones don’t reach out very far into the vital center, so their overall impact is only modest.
- The “k” stones already have one eye and potential for another both on the edge and in the center, so they may be considered modestly strong.

Weaknesses:

- The “i” stones have no eyes and are pressed on both sides by Whites which are stronger.

Opportunities:

- The (modest) chance to exploit the weakness of the White “h” stones.
- The (even more modest) possibility of rescuing the trapped “e” stone.
- The chance to attack and possibly capture the White “f” stone.
- The potential for attacking the White “j” stones which still have only 1 eye.

Threats:

- The still unsettled status of the fairly large “k” group.
- The weakness of the “i” group, sandwiched between the stronger White “h” and “j” groups.

Settled Territory:

- 10+ points in the upper left corner.

White:**Strengths:**

- Because of the trapped Black “e” stone, the White “d” group is very strong, and has great influence in the vital open board center.
- Because of the trapped Black “m” and “n” stones, the White “l”/“o” group is equally strong, and also has great influence in the vital open board center.
- The presence of both of these strong groups on opposite sides of the still open center greatly improves the fighting prospects of White’s still somewhat weak “h” stones. **Weaknesses:**

- The fairly large “j” group as yet has only 1 sure eye.
- The White “h” stones as yet have no eyes are squeezed on both sides by Black.

Opportunities:

- There is good potential to invade and reduce the still porous big Black upper side, either between the “a” and “b” stones, between the “b” and “c” stones, or on the 3-3 point in the upper right corner.
- There is also good potential to make territory between the “f” stone and the “d” group.
- There is also modest potential to expand the left and right side groups into the center.

Threats:

- Mainly that either of the still unsettled “h” and “j” stones will either be captured or will lead to disaster elsewhere if they are forced to run.

Settled Territory:

- Essentially none at present.

Territorial potential:

- 20+ points on the left side.
- Perhaps 15+ or so points in the “d” group.

Action Plan:

- The current global focus is on the interplay between the weak “h”, “i”, “j”, and “k” groups.

Now let’s see how this simple but surprisingly powerful SWOT protocol was applied in a game between two 4D players.

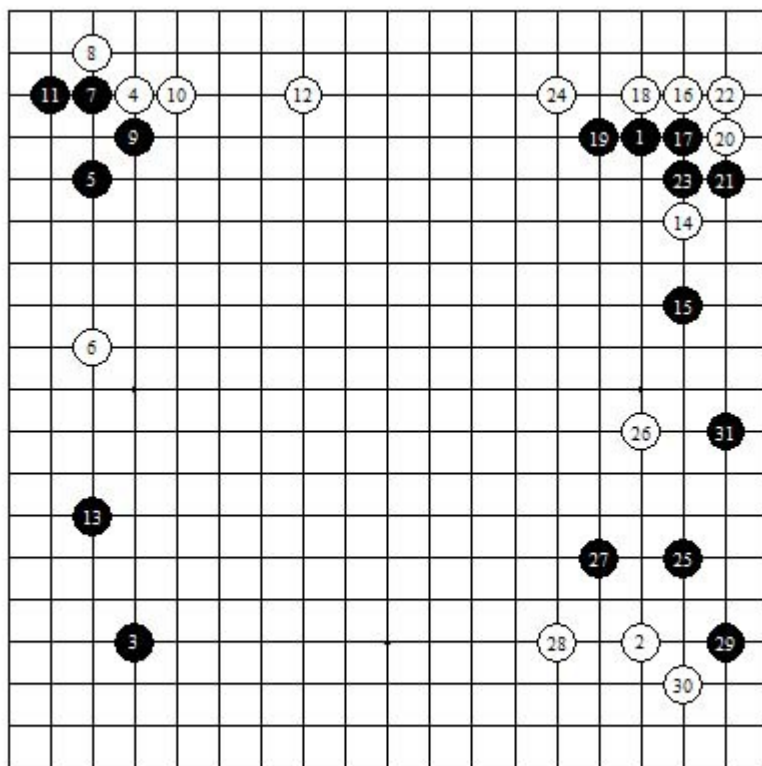


Figure 1
W32 To Play

Settled Territory:

- Essentially none.

Territorial Potential:

- A few points in the upper left.
- Ten to 15 points in the lower left.
- Perhaps 30 or 40 points on the right side, if the problem of W14 and (especially) W26 can be solved.

Figure 1 The SWOT analysis of this position is as follows:

Black:

Strengths:

- A still quite incomplete lower left corner enclosure.
- Good shape in the upper left corner that should allow making two eyes against any currently foreseeable attack.
- A fairly thick and almost connected right side, with one almost abandoned embedded White stone (W14) and one weak White stone (W26), both within Black's Sector Lines.

Weaknesses:

- The "thin" Black lower left side position.

Opportunities:

- The chance to exploit the weakness of W6 on the left, and W14 and W26 on the right.
- The possibility for invasion into the big gap between W12 and 24 on the upper side.
- The Aji of the gap between W18 and 24.
- The potential for expansion from the lower left corner, especially along the lower side.

Threats:

- The potential inherent in White's possible development of W6 on the left and W14 and 26 on the right.

White:**Strengths:**

- A solid, shapely position in the upper left corner.
- Solid and well coordinated positions in the upper and lower right corners.

Weaknesses:

- W6 is a lone White stone splitting two Black positions and within distant Black Sector Lines. But that's not urgent at the moment, because the area is too open for a Black attack to seriously compromise the ability of the W6 to make a base and/or escape.
- W14, which abuts a strong Black wall and is also nearly surrounded, so it's clearly at least temporarily abandoned.
- W26, although at the moment it's easily able to escape. The problem with this stone is that it must be aided before Black can play again to block its easy egress to the still open center, and then capture it create a vast Black territory.
- The gap between W18 and 24, and between W12 and 24.

Opportunities:

- Primarily to develop W26 to prevent a large local Black territory.
- The chance to develop on the lower side.
- The chance to consolidate the upper side by adding a stone between W12 and 24.

Threats:

- Mainly that W26 will be trapped and captured, and that Black will make too large a territory in that area as a result.

Settled Territory:

- Essentially none at present.

Territorial potential:

- Ten plus points in the lower right corner.
- Probably 10 or so points on the upper left side, and in the upper right corner.

Action Plan:

- The current global focus is on the weak W26, and the way in which both sides handle that problem will shape much of the remainder of this game!
- Because the center is still so open, White does not have to support W26 immediately, but he must watch the local situation carefully! So at the moment White can afford to improve his prospects elsewhere, with the lower left as the currently most fruitful target.

The following material may be glossed over at the reader's discretion.

The optimal implementation of a SWOT analysis is mainly a matter of technique, and is therefore outside the realm of our focus on the analysis itself. But briefly showing how the fairly strong protagonists in this game answered this challenge may prove illuminating to the reader, so we show that next, with minimal commentary.

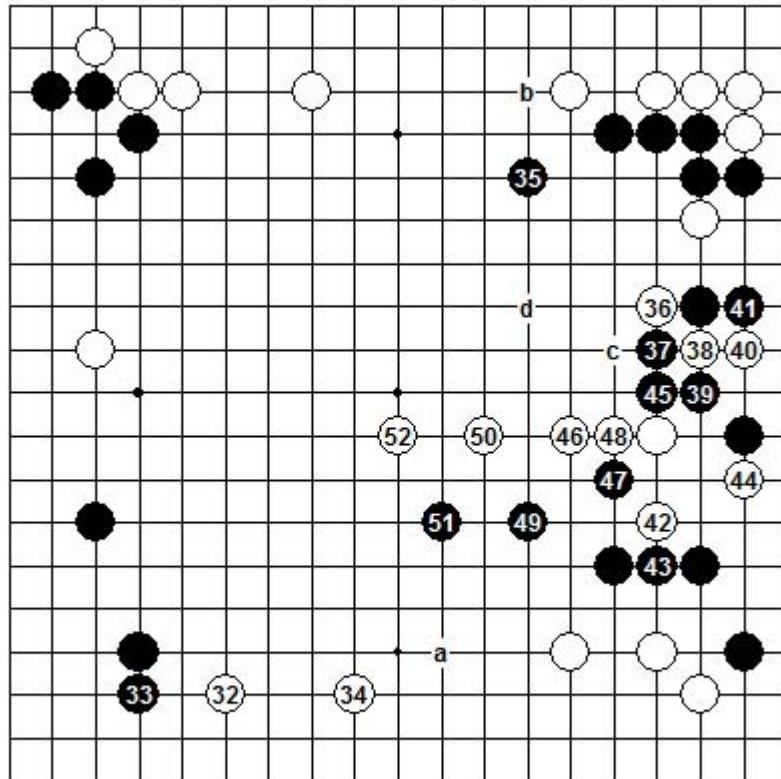


Figure 2
Actual Game Continuation

Figure 2 W32 induced B33 to defend the corner territory, and then W34 not only made a base but threatened to more or less complete a large moyo on the lower side by continuing at “a” or thereabouts at an appropriate later time.

When B35 strengthened Black’s upper border, it would normally induce W“b” in response to preclude Black’s strong pressing move there. But in this situation the threat it posed against W14 and 26 on the right side is far more serious, so White felt compelled to respond to that instead!

W36 follows the maxim of attaching for defense (see Chapter 1), and after the natural Hane of B37 in response, the cross cut of W38 is a standard technique to “make shape”.

But after the atari of B39, W40, B41, instead of playing W42 White might have been better advised to simply play W“c”, B45, and then skip out lightly (and relatively safely) into the center with W“d”. But because White was also looking at the weakness of the Black lower right side group ...

The sequence shown followed through W52, after which Black has succeeded in the first stage of his strategy by inducing White to develop the weak and isolated W26 into a group too large to give up, but which is nevertheless still ripe for attack!

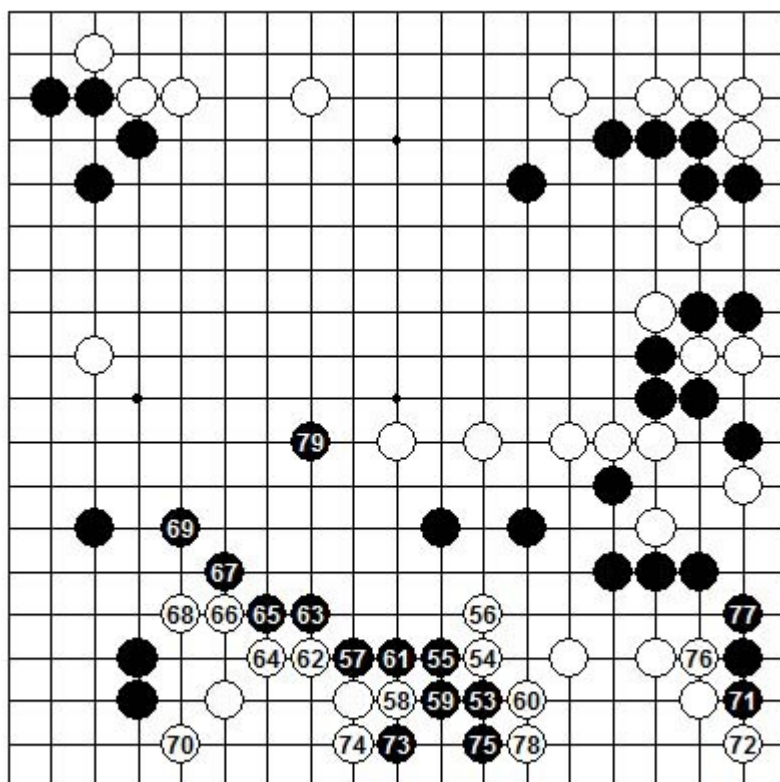


Figure 3
Actual Game Continuation

Figure 3 After W52 White was out of Black's Sector Lines, so there was no good way for Black to immediately exploit that still unsettled White center group. So Black's attention shifted to White's threat to close off a big lower side moyo, and for this purpose the invasion of B53 was an excellent way to start!

In this situation, the instinct of the typical beginner/intermediate would be to immediately aim next at the potentially vulnerable W32-34 two point third line skip in the lower left, but Black's sophisticated plan is much deeper than that!

Black's clever idea is to use B53 et seq as a diversionary mechanism for creating thickness in that area, with which to then:

- support any weaknesses in his own lower right side group, and
- prevent a later flight to safety in that direction by the weak White center group!

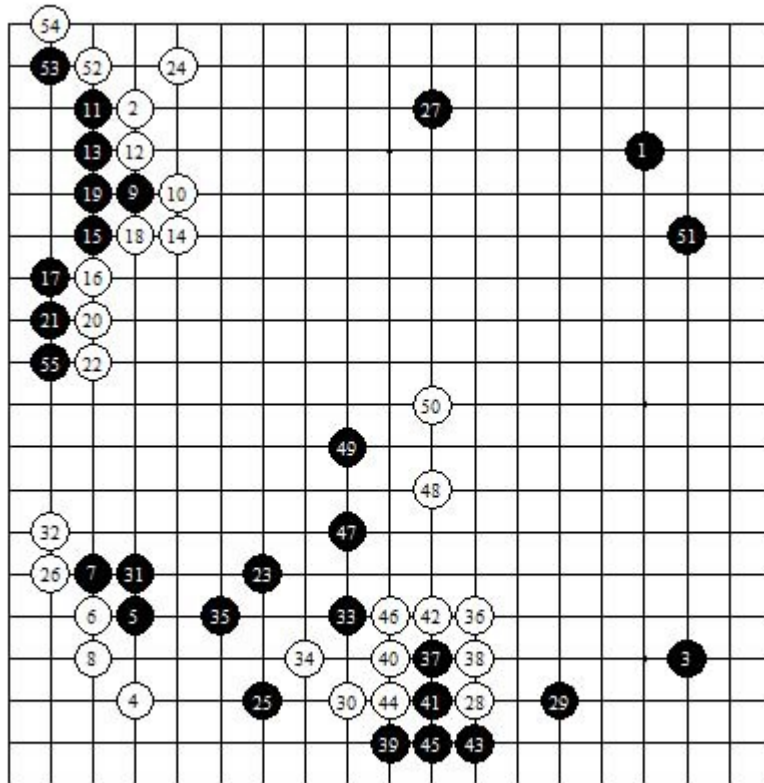
After accomplishing those objectives, Black also emerged with Sente because W78 was necessary to secure White's eyespace and territory in the lower right corner. So Black was free to implement his plan with the cap of B79, blocking the flight of the now large and still eyeless right center White string, once again enclosing it in Black Sector Lines, and forcing it to seek safety above.

What happened after that was primarily tactical and therefore beyond our current interest, but suffice it to say that after a tense and incisive battle the embattled White center group was unable to either make 2 eyes or escape, so White resigned.

This is an almost perfect illustration of the danger that often follows when the Sector Line indications are ignored and a weak group (W26) is belatedly added to in an attempt to save it!

Black's final favorable result in this game depended upon his ability to produce the precise tactics needed to counter White's many serious escape and counterattacking threats, so it was by no means assured after B79. But whether or not it was, the key idea to remember is that it's best to not become enclosed and forced into the kind of desperate situation White confronted here.

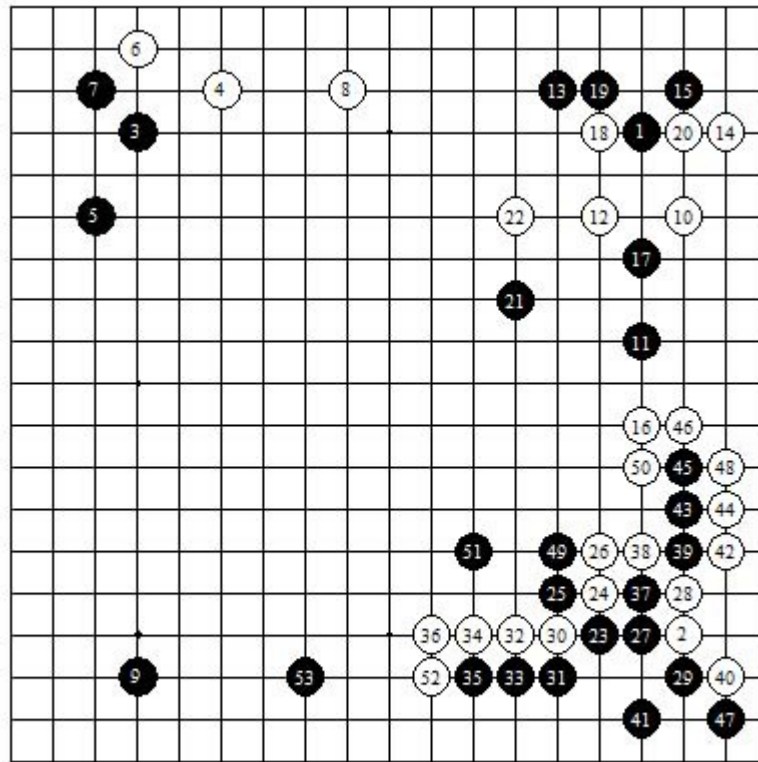
Chapter 6 Problems



B1 - B55
Problem 1 - White To Play

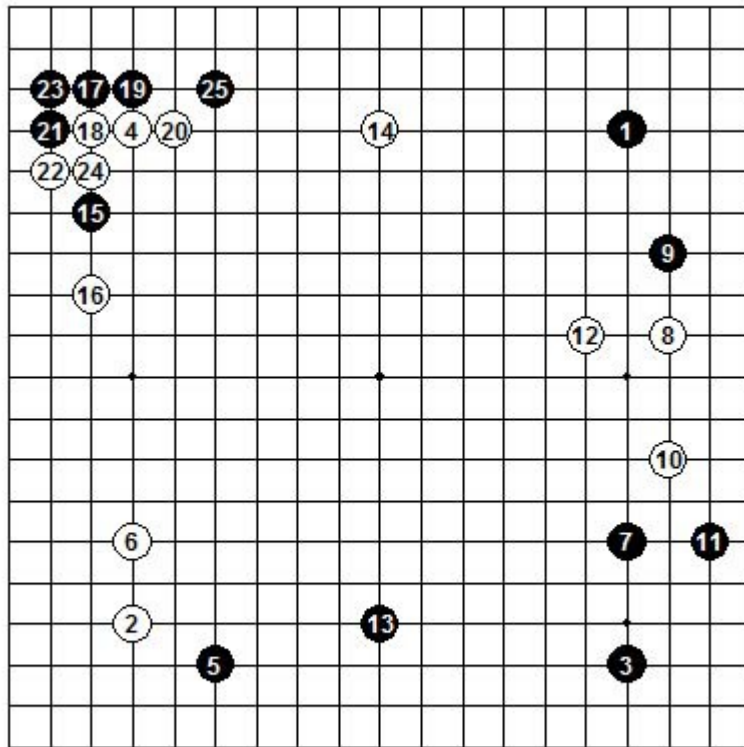
In each of Problems 1 and 2, perform a SWOT Analysis to determine:

- Which stones are Strong and which are Weak, and why.
- Each side's Opportunities and Threats and what they imply.
- Each side's settled territory and territorial potential
- An appropriate action plan.



Problem 2
W 54 To Play

- In each of Problems 1 and 2, perform a SWOT Analysis to determine:
- Which stones are Strong and which are Weak, and why.
 - Each side's Opportunities and Threats and what they imply.
 - Each side's settled territory and territorial potential
 - An appropriate action plan.



Problem 3
Where Should White Play Now?

Problem 3 In this problem you are asked to perform a SWOT analysis, and then use its results to decide where White should play.

For your answer to be considered correct for our current purposes it's not necessary to find the absolutely best move, but selecting one in the appropriate area certainly is!

Chapter 6 Problems – Solutions

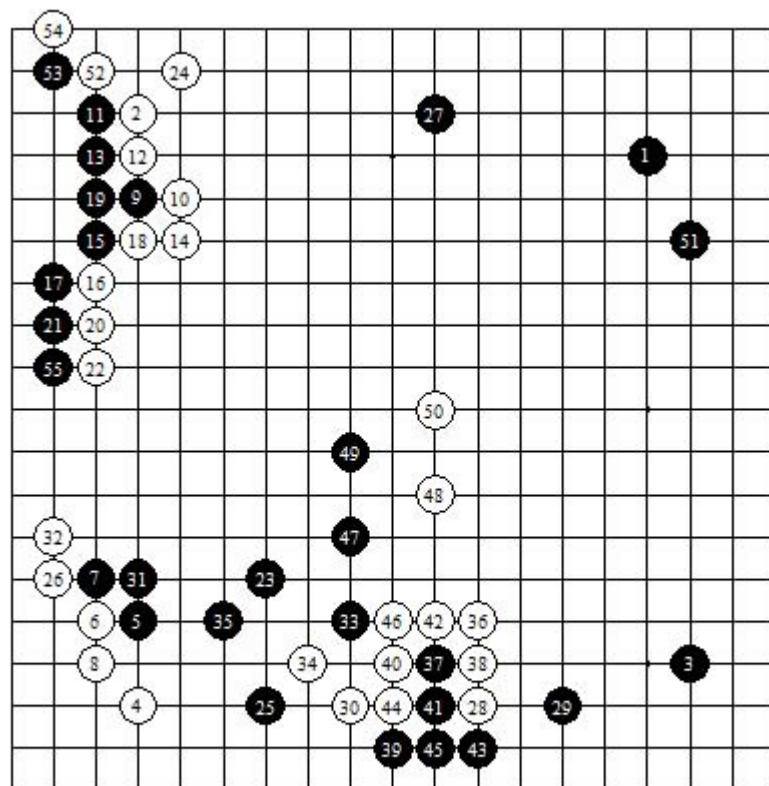
Problem 1

The SWOT Analysis of this position is as follows:

Black:

Strengths:

- The Black upper left corner is not fully enclosed, and can easily make 2 eyes if needed. (Although B53 might be atari'd and captured by White, doing that would be Gote and wouldn't affect the main Black group's viability, so it's not important enough to be played any time soon.)
- The B3-45 lower right side/corner can almost certainly make 2 eyes if needed, although all of the territory there isn't Black's yet because it's still quite open to a White invasion.
- B25 can either connect to the strong Black group above or to the one on the right, so it's safe for now.
- The B5-49 group has good shape, easy center access and some territorial potential, so it, too, is safe for now.
- B1, B51 are in the corner, with no nearby opposing stones.
- B27 has good relationship to B1, B51, plus room to extend on either side or jump to the center if needed.



B1 - B55
Problem 1 - White To Play

Weaknesses:

- No real weaknesses!

Opportunities:

- Attack the still unsettled White center group from the right, in order to build moyo/make territory on the right side.
- Expand/consolidate the B1,27,51 area.
- Extend on the third line to the left from B27.
- Enclose some territory in the lower left center.

Threats:**- Black:**

- A White invasion is feasible in both the upper and lower right corners.
- The B5-49 group is still unsettled.

Settled Territory:

- Perhaps 10 points in the upper left corner + 10 points in the lower right. Total = 20 points.

Territorial Potential:

- Another move in the upper right corner will nail down at least 15-20 points immediately, with prospects of still more to follow when White tries to prevent Black's further expansion.
- A move near the star point on the right side should bring substantial profit either above or below.

- White:**Strengths**

- The W2-54 group is very thick and has good shape.
- The W4-32 lower left corner is almost absolutely secure.

Weaknesses

- The 11 stone W28-50 center group has only rudimentary shape and is only open above and to the right, although it technically isn't enclosed within Black Sector Lines.

Opportunities

- Invade between B1 and 27.
- Invade the right side and use the center group to hopefully make a significant White territory in that area. (Dangerous!)
- Try to build moyo in the lower right center, using the W28-50 group.
- Create a moyo by extending from the upper left group to its right.
- Expand into the open area in the left middle, making some White territory there while minimizing Black's.

Threats

- The big lower right center group has no eyes and is less than solidly thick, so it needs the most careful watching!
- The W2-54 group's thickness might be neutralized without adequate compensation.

Settled Territory

- About 15 points in the lower left corner + about 3 points in the upper left. Total = 18 points.

Territorial Potential

- Extending from the upper left group could net about 15 points.
- Making proper use of the center stones to invade the right side should net some profit, but at the moment it's hard to estimate how much.

The main focus of play now will be on White's twin major detriments:

- The big weak W30-50 lower right center group. Black will at least harass these weak stones and attempt to kill them if possible (highly unlikely, as things now stand), or use that attack to either make territory elsewhere (especially on the right side) and/or prevent White from so doing.
- White is far behind in settled territory, and must redress that balance before it's too late!

Problem 2

The SWOT Analysis of this position is as follows:

Black:

Strengths:

- Three almost certainly secure groups in the upper left, upper right, and lower right.
- In the lower left there are only Black stones thus far, but that's only a minimal advantage because that area is still so open.

Weaknesses:

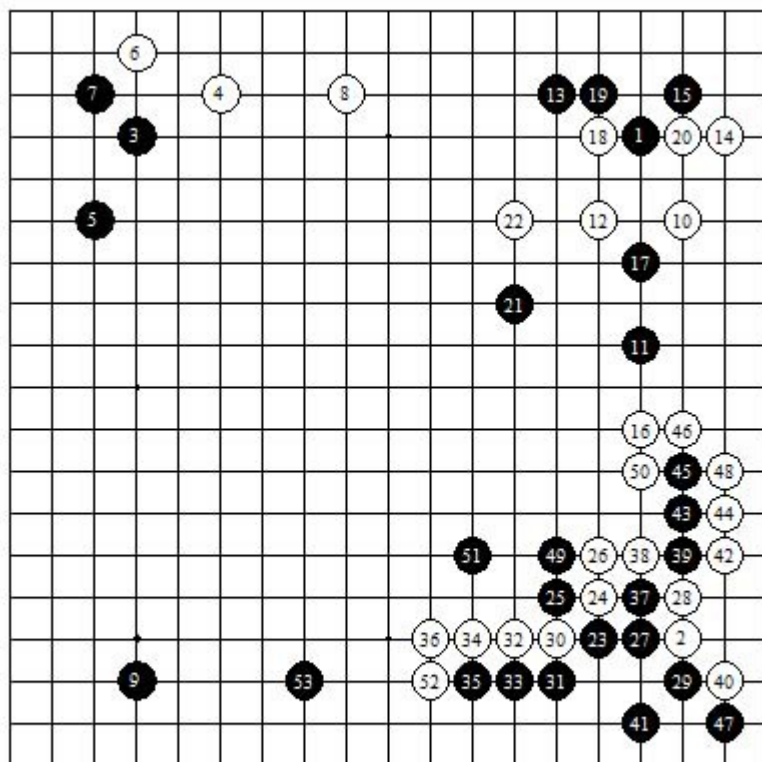
- The three B39, 45 stones are almost certainly "captured".
- Although the three B11 - 21 stones have excellent shape and center access, they are still unsettled.
- The three B25-51 stones are also somewhat weak, and that's compounded by their proximity to the B11-21 stones. This gives White the potential for driving them toward each other, and then setting up a potentially devastating splitting attack.

Opportunities:

- Black's only really significant attack potential exists against the W30 - 52 group.
- There is also some limited potential for an attack against the W10 - 22 upper right stones, whose shape is still incomplete.
- There is a significant territorial potential on the left side, where there are only Black stones at the moment.

Threats:

- The 3 B25 -51 stones are still insecure.
- So are the 3 B11 -21 stones, albeit to a somewhat lesser degree.



Problem 2
W 54 To Play

Settled Territory:

Strictly speaking, none as yet although at least some will almost certainly be realized from each of the first 4 items below.

Territorial Potential:

- Less than 10 points in the upper right corner.
- About the same in the upper left corner.
- A bit more in the lower right corner.
- Possibly 10 or so points in the lower left.
- A presently unquantifiable amount on the left side, which will depend on who is first to play there, and where.

White:**Strengths:**

- The big lower right group on the edge is secure and stable because of the 3 “captured” Blacks.
- The upper left corner formation has excellent shape and space.
- Although the six W10-22 upper right stones have incomplete shape, at the moment they’re relatively strong because the 3 Blacks immediately below are somewhat weaker.

Weaknesses:

- The 5 W30 - 52 stones are solidly connected and have a high liberty count (6), but no shape or eyespace, only limited center access, and are already enclosed within Black Sector Lines! But White has Sente, can lean on B53 to make Sabaki if needed, and has the at least equally weak B25-51 stones to fight with, these stones aren’t in any immediate danger.

Opportunities:

- The potential exists for:
 - an attack on:
 - the B11 - 21 stones
 - the B25 - 51 stones
 - An invasion in the left bottom.
- Most of the lower left side is still virgin territory.

Threats:

- The 5-stone W30 - 52 string is in grave danger of being enclosed, with little eyemaking potential!
- The W10 - 22 upper right group still has very incomplete shape.

Settled Territory:

- About 10+ points on the lower right side.

Territorial Potential:

- A possible 10 or so points on the upper right side.
- Perhaps 10 points on the upper left edge.
- Perhaps 10+ points in the lower left corner.

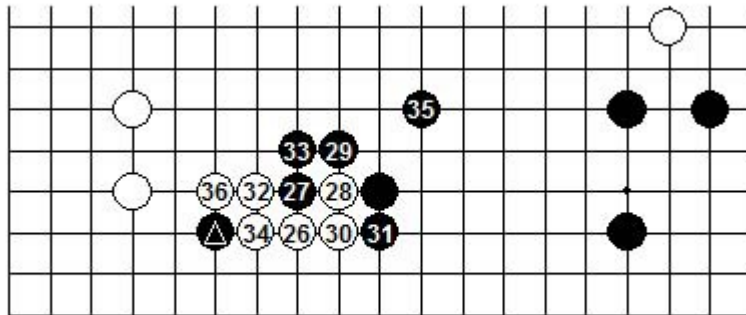
The main focus of play now:

Both side's major weaknesses are in the same area - the interface between the W30 - 52 group and the B 25 -51 group on the lower side, so that must be the immediate focus of play!

That situation involving two weak groups is necessarily quite tactically oriented, albeit with a strong strategic component.

And those tactics must necessarily dominate at least until the fate of the opposing weak groups is established, it's not feasible at this early stage of the fight to lay out a definitive plan for how to proceed after it's been resolved. But once the fate of those opposing groups of stones is better defined, a new SWOT analysis will not only be necessary but will then also be able to better specify the path the game should take from that point on! In that, the possibility for aa splitting attack against the two weak Black groups mentioned earlier may well become significant.

Problem 3



Solution 3
White Steals A Substantial Piece Of Black's Big Moyo!

Solution 3 Your SWOT analysis should have indicated that Black's lower side moyo was not only the largest structure on the board but also the one nearest completion. So your inescapable conclusion should have been that White's immediate action to reduce it was essential!

If that was your conclusion, consider your answer correct even if you didn't find the specific starting point or sequence shown, which is more or less "standard" in similar (and not infrequently occurring) positions.