



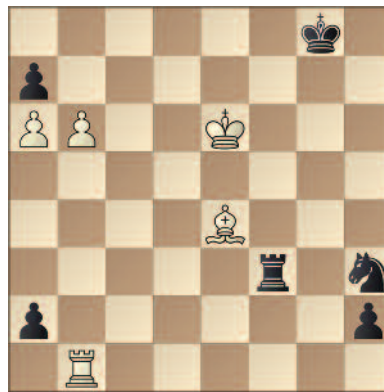
# One Good Idea is (frequently) Enough

Sometimes just one target or plan is enough to win, as Amatzia Avni argues

In 1983 the Russian problemist Evgeny Umnov published a book, containing hundreds of positions, taken from games, studies and problems. In all positions the material balance consisted of rook and knight versus rook, with or without pawns. The author claimed that everything that is in chess – attack, defence, the whole range of combinative play – could be conveyed within such a narrow, limited force.

Taking this reductionist view a step further, we can argue that the whole complexity of a given chess position might be (frequently) expressed by a single idea. Examples of a single idea are, for instance, exchanging pieces to reach a superior endgame, amassing forces against the enemy king, mounting pressure against a weak pawn, promoting a passed pawn, and more.

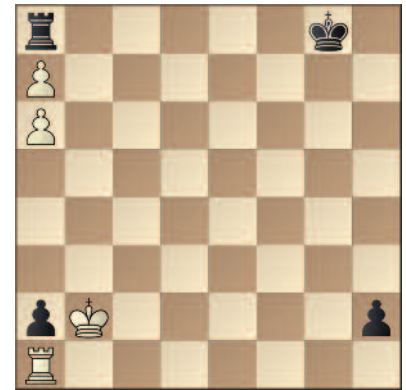
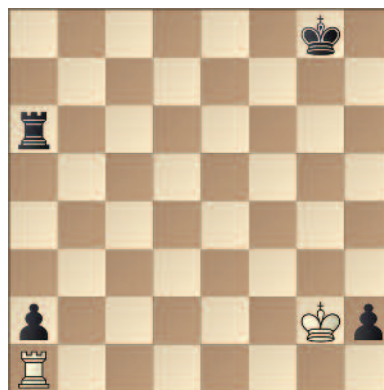
**M. Liburkin**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Prize, *Czechoslovak AT UJCS*, 1948



White to play and draw

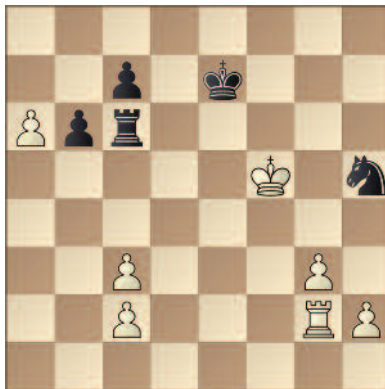
**1 ♖a1! ♜g5+ 2 ♘d5 ♜xe4 3 bxa7!**

A critical position, where the play splits:  
a) 3...♞f8 4 ♘xe4! (and not 4 ♘c6? ♜c3 5 ♘b7 ♜b1) 4...♞a8 (it's also a draw after 4...♘f7 5 ♘d5 ♞c8 6 ♘d6 ♘e8 7 ♞e1+ ♘d8 8 ♞f1 ♘e8 9 ♞e1+ ♘f7 10 ♞h1 ♘f6 11 ♘d7 ♞a8 12 ♘c6 ♞xa7 13 ♘b6 ♞a8 14 a7 ♞g8 15 ♘b7 ♞g7+ 16 ♘b6 ♞g8 17 ♘b7 ♞g7+) 5 ♘f3 ♞xa7 6 ♘g2 ♞xa6.



White heads for the opposite direction, with an identical saving idea in mind: 6...♞xa7 7 ♞h1! ♞xa6 8 ♘a1 ♞h6 9 ♞xh2! (and not 9 ♘xa2? ♘g7) 9...♞xh2 and stalemate.

**V. Nestorescu**  
*Szachy* 1977



White to play and win

**1 ♞e2+**

The immediate 1 a7 is countered by 1...♞c5+ and 2...♞a5. With the preliminary check, White intends to meet the subsequent check from the black rook by sheltering his king with his rook.

**1...♘f7 2 a7 ♞c5+ 3 ♞e5 ♜g7+ 4 ♘f4 ♞c4+ 5 ♞e4 ♜e6+ 6 ♘f3 ♞xc3+ 7 ♞e3 ♜g5+ 8 ♘f2**

One can see that White's play is governed by a single idea, stretching over every rank. (It seems that White can also win by an alternate path: 8 ♘g4 ♞c4+ 9 ♘g5 ♞a4 10 h4.)

**8...♞xc2+ 9 ♞e2 ♜h3+ 10 ♘f1 ♞c1+ 11 ♞e1**  
And the a-pawn decides.

**Peter Boll & Arpad Rusz**  
Internet, 2008



White to play and win

**1 d4+ ♜e4**

1...♘g4 2 dxc5 ♘f3 3 c6 ♘xf2 4 ♘d2 ♘f3 5 c7 ♞e6 6 ♘d3 also wins.

**2 f3 ♞b3+**

Or if 2...♞d5 3 fxe4+ ♞xe4 4 ♞xe4+ ♘xe4 5 ♘c2.

**3 ♘e1**

And naturally not 3 ♞c2?? b1♚+.

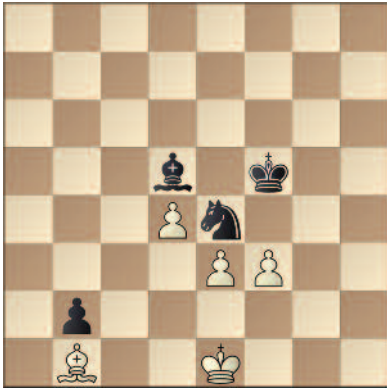
**3...♞d5**

Now if 7 ♘xh2? ♘f7, but 7 ♘h1! ♘g7 8 ♞xa2! ♞xa2 is stalemate.

b) 3...♜c3+ 4 ♘c4 ♞f8 5 ♘xc3 ♞a8 6 ♘b2.

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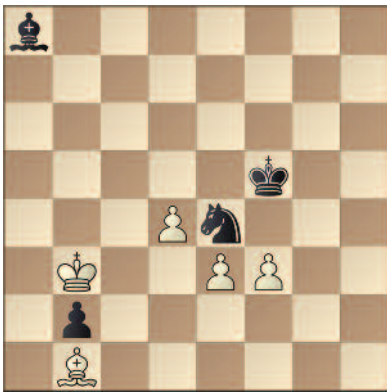


This is the position we wish to examine. On first impression, it's not obvious how White can improve his position: 4 fxe4+? ♔xe4 5 ♔a2 b1♖+ 6 ♔xb1 ♔xb1 holds and 4 ♔d1 ♔b3+ 5 ♔e1 ♔d5 leads nowhere.

**4 ♔f1**

With this move, the white king starts a journey towards the queen's flank. As the direct path wouldn't do, the king has to take the long way.

**4...♔c4+ 5 ♔g2 ♔d5 6 ♔h3 ♔b7 7 ♔h4 ♔c6 8 ♔h5 ♔e8+ 9 ♔h6 ♔c6 10 ♔g7 ♔d5 11 ♔f8 ♔c6 12 ♔e7 ♔d5 13 ♔d7 ♔b7 14 ♔c7 ♔d5 15 ♔b6 ♔a8 16 ♔b5 ♔d5 17 ♔b4 ♔b7 18 ♔c4 ♔a8 19 ♔b3**



**19...♔d5+ 20 ♔xb2 ♔c6 21 fxe4+ ♔xe4 22 ♔xe4+ ♔xe4 23 ♔c3**

It took a lot of time, but really White's play revolved around a single idea, and a simple one: transferring the king to a place where it would take care of the b2-pawn, before embarking on a complete and decisive liquidation.

### T.Fullgrabe-R.Wesener

Germany 1989



**1 ♔f6+ ♔g8 2 ♔d2**

Intending to walk his king to h6 followed by ♔g5, destroying the black king's defences.

**2...♖fb8 3 ♔e3 ♔b2 4 ♔d2 ♔a2 5 ♔f4 ♔xa3**

Black ignores White's plot, or anyway does not evaluate correctly the danger.

**6 ♔g5 ♔c8 7 ♔h6 c3 8 ♔f2 ♔b2 9 ♔g5 ♔xd4 10 ♔xh7 ♔xc2 11 ♔g7 f5**



Now there was a pretty finish in 12 ♔xf5! exf5 13 ♔xd5+ ♔e6 14 ♔xe6#, but White preferred another route.

**12 exf6 ♔d6 13 f7+ ♔xf7+ 14 ♔g6 ♔h8+ 15 ♔xh8 ♔e8+ 16 ♔h6 ♔f7 17 ♔g7 1-0**

The implementation required many moves, yet again, but White unleashed only one idea.

### K.Honfi-B.Ivkov

Sarajevo 1966



**16 g3!** Designed to transfer the white queen from its silly place to the queenside, where it will assist in regaining the d4-pawn.

**16...♔d7 17 a4 ♔e8 18 ♖f1 f6 19 b5 ♔f7 20 ♔e2 ♔h6 21 ♖e1 ♔ef5 22 h3 ♖c5 23 ♔b4 ♖c7 24 ♖c1 ♔c8 25 ♖b2 ♔he8 26 ♔ae1 ♔g8**



**27 ♔xd4**

Black was unable to find a constructive plan, and White's idea had a profound effect. He now holds a huge, decisive advantage.

**27...♔xd4 28 ♖xd4 f5 29 ♖h4**

Back to the kingside, with devastating effect.

**29...g6 30 ♔d2 ♔h7 31 g4 ♔g8 32 ♔h1 d4 33 ♔g1 ♖b7+ 34 ♔h2 ♔g7 35 gxh5 g5 36 ♔xg5 ♔cg8 37 f4 ♔f7 38 ♔eg2 ♔xg5 39 fxg5 ♖f3 40 g6+ ♔h8 41 ♖g5 1-0**

### S. Pivovar

1st comm. *Sachov Umenie*, 1974



White to play and win

**1 f7**

And not 1 g8♖? ♔d7.

**1...♔xg7 2 f8 ♖g5 3 ♖f4+ ♔g4 4 ♖f6+ ♔g5 5 ♖e7**

A single, simple, even banal idea: as soon as Black has exploited all his pawn moves, he will be in zugzwang and be forced to play ...♔g4 which will be met by ♖e4#. The rest of the moves are given for completeness; the reader doesn't have to play through them all.

**5...a5 6 ♖f6 ♔g4 7 ♖f3+ ♔h4 8 ♖f4+ ♔g4 9 ♖f6+ ♔g5 10 ♖e7**

Your turn, sir!

**10...c5 11 ♖f6 ♔g4 12 ♖f3+ ♔h4 13 ♖f4+ ♔g4 14 ♖f6+ ♔g5 15 ♖e7 c4 16 ♖f6 ♔g4 17 ♖f3+ ♔h4 18 ♖f4+ ♔g4 19 ♖f6+ ♔g5 20 ♖e7 c3 21 ♖f6 ♔g4 22 ♖f3+ ♔h4 23 ♖f4+ ♔g4 24 ♖f6+ ♔g5 25 ♖e7 a4 26 ♖f6 ♔g4 27 ♖f3+ ♔h4 28 ♖f4+ ♔g4 29 ♖f6+ ♔g5 30 ♖e7 a3 31 ♖f6 ♔g4 32 ♖f3+ ♔h4 33 ♖f4+ ♔g4 34 ♖f6+ ♔g5 35 ♖e7 c6 36 ♖f6 ♔g4 37 ♖f3+ ♔h4 38 ♖f4+ ♔g4 39 ♖f6+ ♔g5 40 ♖e7 c5 41 ♖f6 ♔g4 42 ♖f3+ ♔h4 43 ♖f4+ ♔g4 44 ♖f6+ ♔g5 45 ♖e7 c4 46 ♖f6 ♔g4 47 ♖f3+ ♔h4 48 ♖f4+ ♔g4 49 ♖f6+ ♔g5 50 ♖e7 a6 51 ♖f6 ♔g4 52 ♖f3+ ♔h4 53 ♖f4+ ♔g4 54 ♖f6+ ♔g5 55 ♖e7 a5 56 ♖f6 ♔g4 57 ♖f3+ ♔h4 58 ♖f4+ ♔g4 59 ♖f6+ ♔g5 60 ♖e7 a4 61 ♖f6 ♔g4 62 ♖f3+ ♔h4 63 ♖f4+ ♔g4 64 ♖f6+ ♔g5**





65 ♔e7 ♕g4 66 ♔e4#

A single operation may also be 'striving for chaos'. This might revolve around a position, such as complicating in a lost situation, or a player's style, as with, say, Jobava or Shirov.

Such an idea can be expressed right in the opening, as in, for example, Suttles-Schmid, Lone Pine Open 1975:

1 a3 d5 2 ♖f3 g6 3 b4!? ♗g7 4 ♜a2

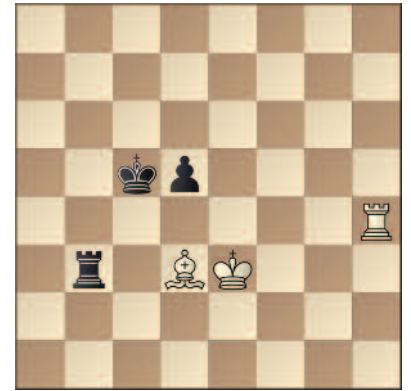


Alternatively, 1 ♖f3 g6 2 ♗g1 ♗g7 3 ♖f3 ♖f6 4 ♗g1, familiar in online bullet games, giving the opponent four free moves, in the hope that he will become mad from the insult.

Finally, another one-dimensional idea is 'to carry on' – just play, prolong the battle on and on, in the hope that the opponent will eventually err.

The following position occurred in I.Nikolic

vs Arsovic, Belgrade 1989, after 111 moves:



While White's wish to test his rival's skills for a while is understandable, stretching the game up to 269(!) moves seems like an *idée fixe*. In this particular case, the efforts didn't bear fruit: the game was drawn.

Hopefully, the royal game seems less difficult and demanding now; all one needs is a single fruitful, strong idea...