

## Perpetual Isometric Exercises

By Sandy McCune Westin

Does the reaction to a force perpetuate that very force, and thereby create an un-endable conflict? Is it time for fresh thinking, or do we expect that perpetuating our grandfather's tactics in war to still work in this new century?

As we know from physiology, isometric exercises (self-force against self-force, think arm wrestling with yourself) strengthens all muscles involved - biceps in both arms, in this example. Likewise, as surely we've learned from the past 50+ years of insurgent vs. military resistance in various parts of the globe, when a terrorist or revolutionary force, non-nationalistic in nature, conducts a campaign of violence, and in turn is met with a military response, it becomes a constant whack-a-mole process which can only be seen as a war of attrition. And in that process, each side is strengthened in its determination and conviction that it is "right", and must perpetuate their own struggle against the other.

My thought... What would happen if a military response were to be gradually reduced and eventually ended? Troops would be withdrawn and not replaced, and funding of the fight placed in other measures. Is it possible the insurgency would likewise curtail its commandeering of increasingly young soldiers, retaliatory terrorist acts and human trafficking to finance its ongoing operations? Might the current reduction in force in Somalia, for example, actually contribute to a counterpart reduction in violence by Al-Shabaab and their kin?

We are so used to the idea that one side in any conflict must "win" to end that conflict, but perhaps we are now, in the 21st Century, in an era where conflicts are not nation-against-nation, but idea/culture vs. idea/cultural. Perhaps its time to find other ways to respond to these new forms of conflict than by fighting violence with more violence ad nauseum, thereby perpetuating the very thing we wish to end.

Sandy Westin, North American Associate  
United Religions Initiative  
Hendersonville, North Carolina USA