

# United, We Stand<sup>1</sup>

*The basis for a democratic state is liberty.*  
Aristotle

The distinguished leaders who gathered in Washington DC to focus on partnerships for peace, democracy, and prosperity made one consistent point: Partnership is not optional if the future is to hold peace, prosperity and democracy for the peoples of Earth.

A universal dilemma of free people is to set limits that facilitate social harmony and civilization without restricting political freedoms. The moral foundation for a nation must be built on respect for human life, a belief in the dignity of mankind, and a devotion to the basic worth of the individual. A democratic nation's creed should guarantee life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to all. These truths must become part of a democratic nation's soul. They are the bedrock for partnership, forming an important bond to other freedom-loving peoples.

The values that define a nation and set the charter for partnerships must reach down into the heart of the people. When government action does not reflect the will of the citizens, disaster looms. For this reason, citizens must be eternally vigilant against the tyranny of government. They must accept responsibility for involvement with the life of their state if the state is to remain free because they are accountable in a direct way for their own liberty. Citizens must build a common vision for their country. They must help develop and learn to rely on a system of laws and justice. They must understand the means whereby the power to govern is legitimately transferred and trust that the constitution will prevail as the principle repository of their national identity. A responsible sense of national pride must be the keel of national purpose, the strong backbone of a people dedicated to improving the future on the foundation of past accomplishments.

The system of government adopted by a state – and the military aspect of governing – must be transparent not only to its citizens, but to the family of nations. People who enjoy freedom's benefits must be willing to protect them and share them to others. Civilians must control the military wisely. The leadership of a country must be held accountable to its citizens. The military must not only reflect the values of the citizenry, it must be a citizen-based force.

In the long years of Soviet domination, these philosophical principles of democracy were obscured by the shadow world of totalitarianism. Young people grew to adulthood with limited access to information. Democratic institutions were unknown for decades and the traditions of freedom were erased. Post-soviet leaders were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problems that must urgently be solved through a partnership of citizen and state that, for most countries, had never existed.

At first, most post-communist states faced an uncertain international future, as Russia and the United States worked out a new balance for cooperation. Today, leaders define their most

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<sup>1</sup> Renfro, Vance, A. "United, We Stand". Partnerships For Peace, Democracy and Prosperity. USA: Program on Transitions to Democracy and University Press of America, Inc., 1997. 215-219. Used by permission.

dangerous challenges as economic depression, moral decay, political corruption, environmental catastrophe, lawlessness and organized crime, drugs, disease, and natural disasters. The list is intimidating for men and women now accountable to their citizens. These ills are not theoretical, nor are they well understood only in the halls of power. They are affecting every community, every family, and every citizen. They may represent the most pressing risk to peace in the 21st century.

To help bring stability and reinforce peace, the United States has been supporting political and economic transitions by helping develop democratic institutions, open market economies, and democratic civil-military relationships. Major goals of the earliest efforts to assist transitions in the military organizations have focused on structural confidence-building relationships, institutional changes and building a network of contacts among leaders. These programs have been fruitful and are continuing, but they are often known only to a small part of the population, in most cases, only to those who are in or deal directly with the military. Programs that initiate and nurture substantive partnerships visible to the citizens of towns and small communities on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean are more promising. Programs that broaden the partnership base, that incorporate the common citizen in the community setting, will speed up transitions to democracy.

The United States National Guard has developed a dynamic program that combines both official military-to-military contacts and shared practical interests in business, education, medicine, culture, and democracy. The National Guard State Partnership Program has established a successful and enduring approach that can help to build functioning democratic institutions and effective market economies. It furthers mutual understanding among our citizens.

This program matches U.S. States and nations of Europe seeking a transition from communism in a liaison that provides knowledge, support, and mentoring to Europeans and Americans alike. It is designed to sustain post-communist European democratic development in the long-term and provide a network of lifetime personal contacts for all participants. The links developed bring many people with their ideas, energy, and resources into constructive relationships that reinforce democracy and expand economic opportunity for everyone. In addition to the specific goals of the Partnership program, the U.S. National Guard provides the example of community-based national defense. The National Guard was placed under command of the State Governors rather than the federal government by the Constitution of the United States as a means of providing community-based checks and balances to federal power. It is directly involved in the process of civilian control of the military and military support to civil authority. The citizen-soldier model offers a way for citizens to fulfill the responsibilities that accompany constitutional rights. The most important contribution of the National Guard State Partnership Program has not been opening the door for warm personal relationships among leaders, although it has certainly done this. A contribution that cannot be gained through other means has been the ability of the Program to involve “hometown” communities all across the land. These partnerships are due to the participation of people throughout America who are willing to help others meet the challenges of life on the frontier of democracy.

The membership of the National Guard has been a natural starting point for building durable partnerships at the community level. Guard members have two roles. In one, they are a

productive segment of American society, earning their livelihoods from their civilian jobs. But, they also serve their country through military service. From a military perspective, the citizen-soldier is an example of a capable, cost effective mobilization asset representing a purely defensive form of combat power that does not threaten neighbor nations.

The National Guard in America, rather than the federal military, has the lead in peacetime engagement and domestic missions. These missions include nation building, civil defense, disaster response, civil disturbance management, youth programs, and counterdrug activity. These common problems must be faced by communities around the globe. The Guard plays an important role in United States national security in these areas. A community-based service concept unites people, reinforces national pride, and provides a visible return on the citizen's tax dollar. It offers the post-communist states in transition a workable alternative to a large standing army. This use of military expertise and equipment offers a good option for countries beset by non-military challenges to stability and peace. The example displayed by Guard members – twice a citizen – is a compelling model for a nation rebuilding its military. The U.S. National Guard is a model for democratic military development.

Involving National Guard personnel, their families, communities, and civilian institutions in bolstering democratic institutions in emerging democracies is one way of providing quality expertise at a reasonable cost while directly involving the American people in an important aspect of building democratic societies abroad. First-hand experience with Partner Nations, enriched by traveling abroad, walking on the newest frontiers of liberty, is valuable. But, the greatest inspiration and the greatest return on investment comes by hosting the men and women of the New Europe for long term working visits in homes, workplaces, churches and schools here in the United States.

This "Bridge to America," begun by the National Guard has an equally important footing in the business community. Using the Guard's civilian ties, the private sector of the United States has been immersed in the effort to rejuvenate free nations and build an entrepreneurial spirit in burgeoning democracies. Through a network of mutually-beneficial partnerships, nations can build a system of mentors in every area of business and industry, including relationships with the government agencies that regulate international commerce. This partnership network is key to continuing stability and economic prosperity.

In business and industry, our sense of partnership must go beyond establishing a series of contacts. Success in the highly competitive global economy demands knowledge, connectivity, and trust. These do not come easily to a new business or to a reborn nation. To survive the challenging early years of competition, most new businesses need a mentor. The men and women in American business who have become involved with the National Guard program have quickly developed a sense of shared obligation for ensuring the success of the initiatives begun with their Partner nations

Establishing partnerships with the people of America – men and women dedicated to helping countries newly liberated from totalitarian oppression – represents a truly inclusive approach to international engagement. In addition, stability and peace in the post-communist states will stimulate productivity and improve the living conditions for long-deprived populations. This

will result in mutually beneficial economic relationships, including new markets for U.S. producers. The long term potential is prosperity for all.

One aspect of the National Guard State Partnership Program can help young leaders abroad learn about democracy and governance in the United States first hand. The Minuteman Fellows Program is designed to bring young, as well as experienced, leaders from partner countries to the United States for a period long enough to absorb the texture of American life. The goals of this program are to work toward building a pool of leadership in post-communist Europe that has been seasoned in the American form of democracy, to build lifetime bonds between American leaders and future European leaders, and to bridge the gap of experience between cultures. The program intends to further the positive values that can bring nations closer in peaceful cooperation.

This program makes good sense, but its successes and potential have not been fully developed. General George Marshall's vision foreshadowed the Minuteman Fellows Program – an intellectual Marshall Plan. The men and women who participate are changed forever. The Minuteman Fellows Program should be expanded significantly. Where we are exporting our values and opening opportunities through dozens of exchanges, we should now accept the challenge of expanding horizons by involving thousands. Where we now sponsor a small group of leaders from Partner Nations, we should also invite young women and men who will be leaders in the 21st century. The United States should sponsor our fellowship participants in universities and businesses, in political and military venues, and house them with American families during their visit to provide a “hands on” experience with grass roots democracy.

The generation now governing must prepare its children to assume the mantle of leadership, to continue the partnership process. Hope and optimism must be kept alive in the hearts of our children. Each nation should develop a program that begins with preschool education and continues as an integral part of cultural development for every citizen. It should emphasize the worth of the individual and the inalienable rights of all people, regardless of national origin, race, politics, or religion. It should teach personal responsibility and the highest regard for human life. It should teach that every citizen is responsible for defending the vital interests of the nation through conscientious action and respect for the law. Young people must see a way toward prosperity and security despite the problems of a global society. They will shape the political agenda.

Youth faces tough challenges in any society. When a nation is struggling through dramatic changes, these challenges are amplified. Moral foundations are given new strength when a nation's youth ask difficult questions and then help work out the answers. For socially conscious youth around the world, minority rights, ecological sensitivity and the bias toward inclusion rather than alienation have become a gospel for activism. The brightness of our future depends more on the commitment of young adults than on the rhetoric of politicians. Hope will be sustained if young women and men feel they are participating in the state's struggle for democracy, progress and peace. But, if our core values are not understood and accepted by the young, the magnificent purposes we profess will be empty cathedrals to an unknown god. Our partnership exchanges should concentrate additional energy on educational and cultural

exchanges for young people. We must work together across national borders so that our children may live free and prosper.

The partnership of allies and the tenacity and inner strength of individual men and women have always been important factors in the spread of liberty. The contemporary relevance of George Marshall's 1947 vision of a partnership network binding our people together is irrefutable. But, the development of our global vision for partnership must be moved to the top of the agenda. We must now work together to develop and strengthen these new partnerships. This is the most important mandate for the 21st century. A new age of cooperation through partnerships can be built from our first small steps.