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PfP and the State Partnership Program: Fostering Engagement and Progress

JOHN R. GROVES, JR.

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"We are at the dawn of a new century. Now is the moment to be farsighted as we chart a path into the new millennium. We can only preserve our security and well-being at home by being actively involved in the world beyond our borders." -- *A National Strategy for a New Century*, The White House, May 1997

The challenges that faced strategic planners in US administrations during the Cold War were anything but simple. The dynamics of preventing a nuclear war made it so. But strategy and doctrine, plans and policies, were clear regarding the goal of containing communism, and were vindicated by the disintegration of the USSR. A comparable consensus has eluded post-Cold War strategic planners for many reasons, not the least of which has been adjusting to the loss of continuity with a familiar and more or less predictable past.

The current National Military Strategy assumes that US military forces will be capable of responding to a wide spectrum of threats in addition to preparing to win the nation's wars. That strategy eschews neatness and closure in the strategic planning process, choosing instead to advance flexible and selective engagement as the policy best adapted to an uncertain and ambiguous global environment.

Descriptions of US foreign policy effectiveness since 1989 range from a "shambles" to a "natural product" of a more independent world. US policy regarding military involvement in Bosnia reveals a similar dichotomy. While US forces there numbered close to 9000 in early 1998, a congressional consensus appeared to be emerging to reduce funding for the operation. The intent was to cap at about 2500 the number of US military personnel to be involved in the peace support operation that started in 1995. In the event, there was no limit imposed on the number of US military forces deployed to the region, but the mission remains contentious.

With Russia no longer a direct threat and with its military only a shadow of its former self (save for a still-potent strategic nuclear capability), the US military has increasingly become a principal arm for the peacetime implementation of US National Security Strategy. In the context of contemporary political, military, and economic conditions, this article describes and evaluates an initiative that is part of US post-Cold War global strategy, the National Guard's State Partnership Program.

The Programs

The State Partnership Program, established as a national initiative "in the spirit of NATO's Partnership for Peace program, seeks to advance US national security policy through constructive military relationships with developing countries under nonconfrontational conditions. Both programs are described briefly below.

The Partnership for Peace

NATO established the Partnership for Peace program in January 1994, "within the Framework of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council." The communiqué announcing the new program noted that "each subscribing state will develop with NATO an individual Partnership Programme" and "NATO will consult with any active participant in the Partnership if that Partner perceives a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security." In the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union security remained paramount, and former satellites sought to prevent a return to the conditions they had so recently renounced.[1]

The Partnership for Peace (PfP), with 27 member countries as of early 1999, has shown considerable promise as a contributing factor to stability and peace in Europe. Several conditions will likely characterize its continuing evolution, such as prolonged periods of relative peace and economic prosperity in Western Europe and a continuing potential for internal conflicts around Russia's periphery.[2] The potential for conflicts in the Middle East, which could have implications for NATO nations and for the states of Eastern and Central Europe, also remains high.[3]

Although the PfP encourages those nations that desire NATO membership to work toward achieving it at their own pace, the manner in which relations are established with each partner country, including the number of military exercises and other events to be conducted, is determined by a comprehensive NATO plan. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, early members of the PfP, were invited in 1998 to join the Alliance. Each PfP nation will determine how it will participate, if at all, in the collective defense of Europe.

A second issue has to do with the quality, purpose, and worth of the military exchange activities that are part of the NATO-PfP relationships. Conducting exercises for the sake of a ceremonial "coming together" is not seen by US military planners as a particularly useful way to help PfP countries become more involved economically and politically with Western Europe and the rest of the world. Finally, it is perhaps most important that attention is given to the stability and prosperity of Russia. It is, after all, the Russian condition that is the catalyst for many PfP activities, not to mention the reason for NATO's continuing mission of regional defense.

State Partnership Program

The State Partnership Program (SPP) is a component of the US strategy of selective and flexible engagement in Europe, Central Asia, and Latin America, and eventually, perhaps, in the Pacific Rim and Africa. At present the purpose of the SPP is to provide opportunities for non-NATO countries to create a foundation for full participation in a shared environment of regional and international military, political, and economic activities.

As the PfP concept was taking shape in the early 1990s, questions arose about giving substance to the idea "on the ground." General Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General John Shalikashvili, then Commander-in-Chief of European Command, sought to fill the strategic vacuum subsequent to the fall of the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Central Europe. The concept of a Partnership for Peace was seen as an opportunity for the United States to influence the emerging governments in Eastern Europe. The intent was that, with relatively small investments by the United States and NATO, interested former Soviet states could be placed quickly and resolutely on a track leading to democracy and market economies.

In 1992 the government of Latvia asked for help in developing "a national military based on the National Guard model of the citizen soldier." The Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Lieutenant General John Conaway, "with the approval of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, jumped at the opportunity, and Michigan agreed to serve as the partner to Latvia. Within weeks, Estonia was paired with Maryland, and Lithuania was paired with Pennsylvania." [4] Thus the National Guard not only met a real need for involvement in Central Europe, its success would contribute directly to the eventual establishment of the Partnership for Peace less than two years later.

The National Guard is the lead agent for the State Partnership Program. Beginning with Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, the SPP sought to align the National Guard with partners in Central and Eastern Europe and in former Warsaw Pact nations, excluding then-East Germany and the former Soviet Union. In each case, the State Partnership Program required the support of the US ambassador and country team in the host nation, US European Command or US Southern Command, the Joint Staff, and the National Guard Bureau.

To manage this new set of challenges, the Department of Defense established the Joint Contact Team Program and its operational arm, the military liaison team. Two other organizations, the joint contact team and the traveling contact team, continue to play important roles in opening and maintaining links to nations moving away from the Soviet experience. This management structure, which anticipated the 1994 creation of the PfP, is used by the Army National Guard for its SPP activities.

- Military liaison teams, assigned permanently in the host country, can be involved with a wide range of projects at the

request of their hosts. Representative initiatives include promoting civilian control of the military; depoliticizing the military; decoupling military force from the political process; using armed forces only for defensive needs; instilling a respect for human rights and the rule of law; establishing a military worthy of public respect that will be subordinate to elected government; developing cooperation and contact between regional and US armed forces; and offering opportunities for training to military leaders in the host country leading to competent, professional militaries as participants in democratic societies and governments.[5]

In keeping with the PFP concept, the National Guard's military liaison teams develop work plans with host country ministries of defense and with the US embassy staff. Each plan specifies assistance required by the host nation to carry out democratic reforms and provides a context within which US strategic objectives can be pursued. By 1999 the SPP was providing a connection between 30 US states and 27 countries of Europe, Central Asia, and Latin America.

- Joint contact teams, working through the military liaison teams, have helped partner countries reshape their military forces and advance on the road to self-sufficiency, democracy, and free market economies. Although it was not initially the purpose of the joint contact teams to help host countries move closer to candidate status for NATO membership, the importance of that objective has gradually increased. The role of the joint contact team, working through the US ambassador and country team, continues to be to tailor specific programs to meet and use the capabilities of the host country. Joint contact teams are usually collocated with the ministry of defense or general staff of the host country.

The first Army National Guard joint contact team (JCT) was established in Hungary prior to the formal creation of the PFP. Teams subsequently have deployed to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and Macedonia. The JCTs in these countries provided an essential linkage and foundation for the PFP to build upon. As the Joint Contact Team Program has matured--roughly half of the members of each joint contact team are from the reserve components--the involvement of reserve forces in this aspect of the national security strategy has repeatedly been validated.

- Traveling contact teams provide expert assistance to host countries in specific functional areas. One important goal of these teams is to help countries develop their internal military capabilities to the highest possible level of interoperability with other nations. Progress on this aspect of regional defense helps build a foundation for those seeking membership in the Alliance.

In these state-to-country relationships, the National Guard is the component within the Department of Defense that supports the SPP. The pairing of National Guard forces and host countries often has been based on existing ethnic or economic ties and other favorable criteria which were seen at the time of formation as enhancing the relationship. The large Hungarian population in Ohio, for example, was a deciding factor in partnering the state with Hungary. Illinois was linked with Poland, and the Czech Republic with Texas, for similar reasons. And although Uzbekistan and Louisiana do not share large populations with similar cultural backgrounds, they do have oil and saltwater coastlines in common.[6] Alignments of US states and interested nations under the SPP are shown in Figure 1.

**State Partnership Participants in Europe and Central Asia,
Grouped by Region, and Their Corresponding US State Partners**

(Associate states are shown in parentheses.)

Baltic States

Estonia - Maryland
Latvia - Michigan
Lithuania - Pennsylvania

Central Europe

Czech Republic - Texas (Nebraska)
Hungary - Ohio
Poland - Illinois
Slovakia - Indiana

Balkans

Albania - South Carolina (New Jersey)
Bulgaria - Tennessee
Croatia - Minnesota
FYROM - Vermont

Central Asia

Kazakhstan - Arizona
Uzbekistan - Louisiana
Kyrgystan - Montana

Moldova - North Carolina
Romania - Alabama
Slovenia - Colorado
Bosnia-Herzegovina - none
Serbia - none
Montenegro - none

The Caucasus

Republic of Georgia - Georgia

Turkmenistan - Nevada
Russia - none
Tajikistan - none
Azerbaijan - none
Armenia - none

Old Russia

Belarus - Utah
Ukraine - California (Kansas)

Source: Donald M. Snow, *National Security, Defense Policy for a New International Order* (3d ed.; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 98-99; Steven Thomma, "US Won the Cold War, Yet Shows a Strange Lack of Clout," Lexington (Ky.) *Herald Leader* newspapers, 24 May 1998, p. A9.

Figure 1. State Partnership Participants in Europe and Central Asia.

Soldiers from the National Guard who participate in the SPP are, so far as the host nations are concerned, indistinguishable from active component soldiers. In addition, the continuing state-to-host-country association provides a degree of consistency and continuity that would be difficult to attain through an extended association with an active component unit. Consequently, the governors, the adjutants general, and the Army and Air National Guard leaders and unit members in each state provide host country counterparts with continuity, stability, and predictability. Training is planned and coordinated on a long-term basis for both the host country and the partner state, with National Guard resources of the partner state tailored and focused to meet the specific needs and capabilities of the host country. These conditions support PFP goals as well as US national strategic objectives.

The SPP has developed the following objectives to ensure that those goals are met:

- Demonstrate military subordination to civilian authority.
- Demonstrate military support to civilian authorities.
- Assist in the development of democratic institutions.
- Foster open market economies to help bring stability.
- Project and represent US humanitarian values.

These objectives are supported by a wide range of activities that often involve combinations of civil, military, and economic events.[7]

SPP initiatives are also under way in Central and South America, presently involving Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Panama, Honduras, and Belize, with the same expectations as in Europe and Central Asia. In the future, there may be partnerships with countries in the Pacific Rim and Africa.[8] Thus as National Guard resources are brought modestly but increasingly into the SPP, many host countries are reexamining the merit of a reserve force in place of large standing military forces. The National Guard concept of a citizen-based military force functioning in peacetime under the immediate control of a civilian state governor, yet training to go to war if necessary, has slowly begun to receive attention within some host countries.

The State Partnership Program in Action

Virtually all of the state National Guard partners have conducted exercises, exchanges, or visits of one type or another with host nation militaries and civilian leaders. A newly created "Guardex" (Guard exercise) program within the International Affairs Directorate of the National Guard Bureau allows visits by individuals and groups from host nations to observe military and government institutions at work in Washington, D.C., and in US communities throughout the country. Other contacts between partner and host participants have been equally productive and have given leadership representatives from both groups opportunities to define the range and limits of interactive programs, while sharing hospitality and developing mutual respect.

Two important objectives motivate host country leaders to participate in the SPP. The first is to enhance host country

prospects for membership in NATO. While the timing and probability of NATO membership will vary with each country, most SPP members want to strengthen ties with Western countries while moving decisively away from Russian influence. The other is the desire of host country leaders to demonstrate an association with the United States in the quest for tangible economic and military benefits. Involvement in host country internal politics is unavoidable and requires careful analysis in coordination with each country team to limit misunderstandings, confrontations, and the inevitable disappointments.

Since 1994, dozens of SPP exercises have been conducted in host countries involving peacekeeping skills, humanitarian aid, maritime search and rescue, command post exercises, convoy operations, maritime embargo, air exercises, mine and countermine operations, and other aspects of military support to civil authorities. Examples include the following:

- A summer 1998 event sent almost 1200 Kentucky National Guard soldiers to Ecuador as part of an exercise supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and US Southern Command. The result will be, in part, to enhance the developing SPP relationship for all of Latin America.
- Exercise Baltic Challenge '97, conducted in Latvia, focused on international peacekeeping and included participation from the National Guards of Maryland, Michigan, and Pennsylvania with their partner nations Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
- Indiana and Alabama National Guard personnel participated in Exercise Cornerstone '96 in Romania. This humanitarian exercise involved the rehabilitation of a military hospital, an international daycare center, and an orphanage for HIV-infected children.
- Several states participated in an earthquake preparedness exercise in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- US reserve forces from the Army, the National Guard, the Marine Corps, and the Navy participated in Exercise Uje Kristal in Albania, which produced hospital improvements.[9]

There have been some setbacks as well. A senior military leader in Albania harshly criticized the National Guard for creating false expectations when a two-week assistance visit by a North Carolina engineer unit failed to produce the basis for a modern, American-style hospital. The official said that Walter Reed Hospital was the example of what had been expected. In another instance, the Belarus US country team has canceled National Guard SPP exercises because progress by Belarus toward meeting PfP and SPP criteria has been lacking. Belarus seems more inclined to reunite with Russia on substantive issues than most other newly independent states. In the main, however, SPP exercises have been successful and have not involved great expense[10] or large numbers of individuals in the exchanges. Apart from the continuing presence of military liaison teams in host countries under the auspices of the Joint Contact Team Program, National Guard personnel are usually deployed to the host country for their normal two-week annual training period.

In addition to the traveling contact teams mentioned above, several other kinds of National Guard activities in support of the SPP have become commonplace. One is familiarization tours that allow partner-nation experts to visit US facilities in Europe and the United States to prepare for future contacts; another is Guard exercises that allow host nation military units, usually with fewer than several dozen members, to train in the United States with counterpart National Guard units. Minuteman Fellowships and other SPP-related activities allow for specialized visits of up to two months in duration by host nation representatives to observe civil-military relationships in action, with the emphasis on reserve component activities. Literally hundreds of SPP exercises have been completed, are under way, or are planned. A list of selected exercise synopses is available from the National Guard Bureau International Affairs website.[11]

The Future of the State Partnership Program

The PfP and its subset, the SPP, have provided opportunities for countries to assert themselves in ways that were not conceivable under Soviet domination. The PfP has helped give new life to NATO, and the SPP has supplemented that outcome through direct involvement with interested countries using National Guard resources.

Under the best of conditions, it might be hoped that both the PfP and SPP would go out of business because both had met all the needs of all the participating nations. For PfP countries this notion implies complete transition to

independent status, involvement in the economic and political life of Western Europe, and, for those who desire it and are qualified, membership in NATO. For most countries, this final goal is still years away.

The PfP and SPP programs have been structured to bring resources and involvement from Western Europe (NATO countries in particular) and the United States (individual states through the National Guard) directly and economically into the post-Soviet landscape. These conditions, along with the suddenness of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the great disparities among the successor states, cause the PfP and SPP to be well suited to the circumstances.

But major challenges remain. The first is for the PfP, and in particular the SPP, to refrain from seeking objectives that are unreasonable or that could create expectations that cannot be fulfilled. The National Guard Bureau, for instance, has suggested that the SPP is the new "Marshall Plan" for Europe. Unfortunately, the scope and intent of the Marshall Plan exceeds that of the SPP many times over. The work of the PfP program and the SPP can provide only limited opportunities for engagement and involvement when compared to the broad agenda for reconstructing the economies and infrastructure of Europe after World War II.[12]

Second, as militaries in former Soviet-controlled countries are given new directions with greater professionalism, the potential for the misapplication of military force by political interests must also be carefully monitored. It will do little good to create a competent military force within a host country only to see it used for purposes contrary to democratic principles.

Third, the SPP has created a level of dialogue within host countries that has fostered discussion of a variety of subjects; naturally most have been primarily military in nature. In the future, civilian and military representatives from host countries should have opportunities to observe firsthand the conditions that are achievable when democracy and market economies are at work and when both take precedence over the military. Whether in Europe or in the United States, opportunities to expose civilian and military leaders from SPP host countries to these forces and practices are indispensable in moving from an abstraction to reality.

Fourth, the foregoing serve to underscore the goals of NATO in reaching a common defense relationship while minimizing the need for large standing militaries in member and PfP countries. These concepts, however, are still foreign to many PfP and SPP host countries. Some Central European and other leaders value modern military forces as indicators of status as well as the means to resist aggression. Many of these same leaders have found it difficult to accept democratic institutions as the foundation of their respective governments.

Fifth, although the point has not been reached in SPP interactions, it will become evident that military-to-military relations can do only so much to advance the more fundamental goals of conversion to democracy. Nevertheless, the SPP, by involving members of the US National Guard with host countries, has introduced the concept of the citizen soldier to the military and civilian leadership and sought to advance the democratic concept of civilian control over the military in the process. For some host countries, this is a new concept. The idea of soldiers who are civilians--representing a cross section of occupations and yet forming a capable and deployable military force--is difficult for many in the host countries to grasp.

National Guard personnel can demonstrate to host country military and civilian leaders the value of being citizen soldiers, but the underlying principles may require a long period of evaluation before finding acceptance. The main reason for dissonance is often related to the inability of host country economies to provide the dual work opportunity for would-be citizen soldiers. Most host country economies simply cannot create conditions in which an individual can find work as a civilian while at the same time serving as a member of the military and receiving compensation for that service. That the model of the National Guard may be out of reach for now, however, does not diminish its value as an abiding example. NATO Deputy Secretary General Sergio Balanzino set a standard with his observation that "perhaps the [other] NATO nations' reserve forces can mirror what has been demonstrated by the US National Guard State Partnership Programme." [13]

Looking Ahead

While the SPP and PfP have accomplished a great deal, the time is approaching when both must submit to a rigorous examination of benefits received for resources expended. The involvement of the US military in such programs,

particularly the National Guard, has been viewed as an appropriate mission in support of a US national security strategy of flexible and selective peacetime engagement. For the time being, any program that permits US soldiers to work within countries converting to free-market, democratic societies has great utility, but eventually the results of these efforts must be scrutinized. If the goals are inappropriate or not attainable, especially for the State Partnership Program, sooner or later there will be a reappraisal. US military involvement in host countries through the SPP should diminish over time, as engagement shifts to political and economic initiatives. But for now, the military continues to be the principal form of engagement in many parts of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

To the extent that developing countries respond to economic stimuli and the growth of democratic institutions, the PfP and SPP will have been successful. The opposite will be true if only the military forces of the host countries have been improved. Each of these effectiveness indicators requires constant monitoring and objective evaluation.

But it is the effects of the PfP and SPP on the US military, active as well as reserve, that requires the greatest attention. As our military continues to be engaged in US peacetime foreign policy, particularly in peace operations, it must not lose its ability to perform primary warfighting missions. If the armed forces are used excessively in peace operations, military skills will atrophy and equipment will deteriorate, both of which will have a bearing on the ability to fight and win quickly. The US military should not be allowed to become debilitated through its participation in foreign training and goodwill programs. Measuring this dimension of US national security and national military strategies must be a constant process.

Only armed forces that place warfighting first have the credibility needed to make a success of programs like the PfP and the SPP. Within these limits, the Partnership for Peace and the State Partnership Program have room to grow and to continue to advance US national interests. The primary focus, however, must remain on winning in war; direct contact with our partners in these programs is and must remain a laudable and compatible but subordinate effort.

NOTES

1. NATO Ministerial Communiqué, Annex to M-1(94)2, 11 January 1994.
2. See, for example, Sherman W. Garnett, "Russia and its Borderlands: A Geography of Violence," *Parameters*, 27 (Spring 1997), 4-21.
3. See Adolf Carlson, "NATO and North Africa: Problems and Prospects," and Stephen J. Blank, "Russia and the Baltics in the Age of NATO Enlargement," both in *Parameters*, 28 (Autumn 1998), 35-49 and 50-68, respectively.
4. Mark L. Kalber, "The National Guard State Partnership Program: A Bridge to America," *Army*, April 1998, p 44. This short article is a primer on the State Partnership Program, written mainly to advance the worth of the State Partnership Program in providing constructive points of direct contact between the National Guard and the military leadership in PfP host countries. For an overview of the Partnership for Peace (PfP), see Vernon Penner, "Restructuring the Future, Partnership for Peace," *Strategic Forum* (National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies), No. 97, December 1996.
5. The military liaison teams were deliberately not collocated with the US embassy in order to increase a sense of openness between activities of the liaison team and host country military personnel. In addition, the separate location was intended to symbolically distance the Joint Contact Team's activities in the context of the PfP from earlier Cold War polarities symbolized by the embassy.
6. Kalber, p. 45.
7. The activities include emergency response, crisis action, personnel management, education and training, logistics, resource management, military law and security, environmental protection, community relations, state and federal finances, civil engineering, civil affairs, communications, military medicine, public affairs, transportation, policy development, and counterdrug activities.

8. Kalber, p. 45. Among other enhanced activities, the SPP allows for military-to-military exercises, support of the PfP, security assistance programs, and support to the Marshall Center in Garmisch, Germany, including instruction to the next generation of military leaders from former Warsaw Pact nations in military reserve component capabilities. In a meeting of the Defense Science Board on 22 April 1998, Brigadier General Bruce M. Lawlor (Deputy Director of Operations, Readiness and Mobilization and Director of Military Support for the DA Office of Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans) presented a briefing entitled, "A Role for the National Guard in Coalition Building Operations." The purpose was to emphasize the development of coalition building, capabilities, and relationships as core issues in peacetime military engagement through the use of the National Guard in the context of the PfP and SPP programs, in addition to other CINC-directed theater engagement missions.

9. Michael Fleming, "The State to State Partnership Programme," *NATO Review*, 45 (May-June 1997), 23.

10. The Joint Contact Team Program budget for FY 1997-98, for example, was \$12.3 million.

11. The url for the National Guard Bureau International Affairs section is <http://www.ngb.dtic.mil>.

12. In operation from 1948 to 1951, the Marshall Plan pumped \$13 billion of reconstruction aid into postwar Europe.

13. Quoted in Fleming, p. 23.

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