

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR A NATIONAL PEACE ACADEMY

The effort to design and establish a National Peace Academy in the U.S. is being convened by a consortium of three organizations: Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit of the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, Biosophical Institute, and Omega Point Institute. The very coming together of these groups itself demonstrates that new partnerships are both necessary and possible.

Business is good for peace, and peace is good for business.

The business community is uniquely positioned in its capacity to build peace. For example, two nations that trade together are reciprocally dependent, where the economic union thrives on satisfying the mutual needs of both countries. Further, business employs people and brings them out of poverty, both of which reduce violence: a one percent increase in unemployment is accompanied by a six percent increase in homicides, and the lower the percentage living in relative poverty, the lower the number of violent offenses.

Business becomes more efficient and easier to conduct as peacefulness increases, while less peaceful environments bring financial risks. Peaceful environments – whether domestic or international, urban or rural – reduce investor uncertainty surrounding events beyond the investor's control. Thus, foreign direct investment is greater in countries that are peaceful towards each other. On the other hand, violence makes international commerce and investment more expensive, shifting production away from long supply lines that would be more efficient and economic under stable political circumstances. In addition, violence disrupts trade lines, raises insurance costs and shipping tariffs, and undercuts tourism and business travel. Violence also dramatically reduces the capital infrastructure and size of a nation's GDP, thereby reducing the size of its exports and imports, as well.

In addition, the private sector is increasingly being asked to assume roles outside the purview of traditional business practice. From voluntary economic development to post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization to international boycotts and sanctions, business is being called upon to pressure governments on policy decisions, employ and reintegrate rebels after disarmament and demobilization processes, rebuild fragile communities in an effort to secure operations, and resolve local conflicts in communities where the company is doing business. Much of this happens in *ad hoc* fashion, frequently but not always in collaboration with national and international institutions, and often on the fly.

Research substantiates the arguments above. Research has found that there are strong correlations between the *Global Peace Index* – an index that ranks countries by their level of peacefulness – and: 1) the *United Nations Human Development Index*, 2) the *Environmental Sustainability Index*, 3) the *Ease of Doing Business Index*, and 4) the *Global Competitiveness Index*. One of the most striking findings in the research is that per capita GDP increases on average by approximately \$3,145USD for every 10 places a country increases on the *Global Peace Index* ranking. Further, according to Paul Collier, when a country's per capita income increases one percentage point, the risk of conflict is correspondingly reduced by one percentage point.

How the National Peace Academy helps business tap into its peacebuilding capacity.

However, more research is needed. On this, the National Peace Academy is prepared to study business practices promoting economic development, post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization, community dialogue processes, and conflict management and resolution in select conflict environments and/or intractable conflict settings – domestically within the US as well as internationally.

Moreover, as part of the design process to begin at the March 2009 Design Summit, the Consortium has identified six key components as a framework for the National Peace Academy. In partnering with business, it is important to note how these proposed six components relate to business and the advancement of peace.

NPA Component #1: Create an interdisciplinary graduate program that intersects with and ties together the many disciplines within the social and physical sciences, the natural and life sciences, the arts and humanities, and the professional fields of engineering, business, medicine, and law.

Business Application: NPA graduates and trainees emerge with an understanding of the concepts of “Cradle to Cradle” design and “Whole Systems Design.” Graduates learn how to harness the full range of society’s social and physical capital, generate new markets based on understanding of the whole system, and create new space for innovation and ingenuity.

NPA Component #2: Provide a core competency in ethics and character education, emphasizing the development of one’s own peace capacities.

Business Application: NPA graduates and trainees emerge with skills directly relevant to Human Resources, such as skills to improve employee efficiency, resolve internal disputes and conflicts, draft corporate ethics strategies, and pursue a triple bottom line (planet, people, and profits).

NPA Component #3: Research, develop, and offer peacebuilding policy and action options at the local, state, and federal levels for the peaceful resolution of domestic and international tension and conflict.

Business Application: NPA graduates and trainees emerge equipped with the knowledge and skills to broker effective public-private sector partnerships, including, for example, best practices and strategies for business lobbying and advocacy to pursue sustainable peacebuilding policies.

NPA Component #4: Coordinate peace studies, research, and advocacy, filling in spaces that others are not doing, and cooperating and collaborating to draw on the strengths of all in a synergistic synthesis, including establishing a peace library and internet link to other peace literature, writings, and information.

Business Application: NPA graduates and trainees come with the knowledge of best practices vis-à-vis private sector roles in conflict zones and promoting new models for economic development in strategic regions around the world.

NPA Component #5: Collaborate with war colleges and military service academies to strategize peaceful ways of addressing worldwide security issues and to provide training and experiential fieldwork in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding.

Business Application: NPA graduates and trainees have the skills for advising business on their role in post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization opportunities (e.g., Iraq, Afghanistan), international and national networks and agencies with which to partner, and best practices to pursue in conflict zones.

NPA Component #6: Engage with the growing peace education field in developing peace education as integral to pre-school through graduate school.

Business Application: NPA graduates and trainees learn, draft, and help canonize new business models and curricula vis-à-vis “peace and sustainability” for management and business schools nationwide as well as pioneering and entrepreneurial private sector leaders.

In Conclusion

Clearly what we are doing today is not working. We are exhausting all possibilities and yet we are still at war, have the highest incarceration rate in the world, the highest homicide rate in the developed world, and struggle with a culture of violence. We think the founding of a National Peace Academy will bring us a quantum leap closer to the society we all wish for. This is one of the most compelling concepts of our time – one of the answers to living in a society that works for all of us.