



Quaker reflections on their testimony to Peace, in light of the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

On the first anniversary of the War in Ukraine

Quakers have been asking some very hard questions about their testimony to peace and their forms of pacifism following the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. They are hard because there are no simple right answers. The questions seem to invite judgements and can make us feel vulnerable and defensive. Strangely, by talking about our conundrums we sometimes feel even more powerless to do anything about avoidable violence and misery. So why try to tackle such hard questions as: 'Can I support armed self-defence and still be a Quaker?' 'What does witnessing to peace mean in the midst of war?' 'What would I do if I were in Russia?' The Quaker way challenges each one of us to come up with our own responses and test these with others in our Quaker communities.

The questions were asked in both personal and public settings, but fundamentally they arise from within. We cannot help but ask these questions and struggle as a church and as individuals who have made a commitment to peace, as set out in 1660:

'All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world.'

Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee endorsed the organic development of the Ukraine/Russia Cluster, a group made up of Friends and staff, to respond to the questions. Those involved in the group were aware that they were responding without knowing the context behind why the questions were being asked. As Co-Clerks of Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee, we thank all those who have been involved in this group, who have taken the lead in facing these hard questions.

The range of responses intentionally open up avenues for Quakers to explore as part of their own spiritual journeys, rather than presuppose there are single correct answers or definitive Quaker positions. We hope that you will explore them in the knowledge that peace is a process and not an easy one. Indeed, a hard process, involving many hard questions and emotions, which can be helped by sharing.

In Friendship,

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Morality of Pacifism	3
1. Are campaigners against the arms trade naïve, or worse, and doing Vladimir Putin's job for him?.....	3
2. Does 'love require of us' that we just care for the victims, and continue to show careful tolerance towards the person carrying out the act? Or should we take action against the person doing harm to prevent them from doing more?.....	4
3. What does it mean to be a pacifist?	5
4. Is the middle of a war the right time to be pacifist?	5
5. What do you do about a war of aggression when one party won't leave well alone? ...	6
6. What to do when Putin doesn't care about international law?	6
7. In armed conflicts those who take the pacifist stance stand back and can seem to allow others to fight on their behalf and deal with armed aggression and war crimes committed by dictators. Is this stance sustainable?	8
8. Can violence ever be justified? Is it ever right to weigh the benefits and harms of striking back?	8
9. Would it have been right to tell Jews to surrender to Hitler in 1939? Likewise, is it acceptable to say to Palestinians, 'let the Israelis take away your land, your property, your livelihoods'?.....	8
Nonviolent responses to war	9
10. Can Quaker mediators help or hinder diplomacy?.....	9
11. How should we (as Quakers) respond to those who commit evil acts, and who do not respond to non-violent attempts to get them to stop, and whose acts of evil are causing ongoing suffering?.....	10
War and weapons	13
12. Is the invasion of Ukraine qualitatively different from other wars e.g. the 2003 Iraq war or the war in Yemen?	13
13. Are smart weapons morally the same as weapons of mass destruction (WMDs)? 15	
14. Can or should Quakers take an interest in defence policy?	16
NATO	17
15. What would we do without NATO?	17
Spiritual dimensions of the peace testimony	18
16. Is the peace testimony a personal or a political position? Can it be both?.....	18
17. Do you faithfully maintain our testimony that war and the preparation for war are inconsistent with the spirit of Christ?	19
18. Can I remain in Quaker membership if I feel that the pacifist approach is the wrong approach to take in relation to Ukraine?	19

Morality of Pacifism

1. Are campaigners against the arms trade naïve, or worse, and doing Vladimir Putin's job for him?

Campaigning against the arms trade is a vital part of tackling the roots of war. Naiveté is believing, against all evidence, that war is the solution.

- 1.1. This is a familiar charge, from World War I onwards. We would justify a campaign for arms reduction on the grounds that such reductions will never happen without people campaigning and making the argument that accumulation of arms contributes to the occurrence of war and as we bear witness to the fact that we believe war is wrong we will also want to reject the arms trade.
- 1.2. Surely the arms trade has supplied Putin!
- 1.3. No. The arms trade fuels wars, and arms companies profit hugely from them. They depend upon war, and their trade is core to the war system. Nation states spend huge amounts on it, usually at the expense of healthcare, housing, and education for their societies – things that make for human security rather than state security. This trade also creates a very large black market, upon which terrorist groups and violent gangs feed – if you like, the non-state purveyors of violence. Campaigning against the arms trade is a vital part of tackling the roots of war. In my view, naiveté is believing, against all evidence, that war is the solution.
- 1.4. War seldom brings a genuine solution to a problem and always leaves terrible after-effects. A case can be made for a country to have enough weapons to defend itself, but the arms trade goes far beyond this. Its products range from instruments of torture and repression to means of mass destruction; it is driven by the profits from selling death, and our government's licensing and guarantee schemes make it look far more profitable to our country than it really is. The trade encourages the illusion that armaments bring security, and this has a huge and negative effect on the way that international diplomacy is conducted.

Instant unilateral disarmament by one country might be 'doing Putin's job for him'; but that's not the fundamental issue. Any sincere attempt to remove war as an element of policy world-wide must include a vigorous attempt to reduce the means of war.

2. Does 'love require of us' that we just care for the victims, and continue to show careful tolerance towards the person carrying out the act? Or should we take action against the person doing harm to prevent them from doing more?

Compassion compels us to care for those who suffer, our work to transform harm compels us to confront the causes, with love, courage, creativity and strength.

- 2.1. We don't usually have any role in responding, even if we have an opinion. Which of us has access to President Putin? What has been the outcome of attempts at a military solution? And most of us, in interpersonal incidents, would have far greater nonviolent than violent power to prevent violence.

Love requires us to do both. There are roles for us all to play: some (most?) would care for the victims, but at the same time, it's essential to try to prevent more victims. Our compassion compels us to care for those who suffer, our work to transform compels us to confront the cause, with love, courage, creativity and strength.

There is no final answer to questions 2, 6 and 11. Their value lies in the discussions they raise, which should lead to individual and group decisions by particular people in a particular situation. I have sometime found myself in a situation where there is no morally clear option and yet I need to act. In such cases, I must simply ask myself which choice is likely to do the least harm. So we need to question what is meant by 'action' (in the second question). Can we be sure of finding means who do not escalate the amount of hostility and destruction?

Sometimes the discussion is based on a false dilemma. In truth I don't know any way that I can change or stop Vladimir Putin, Bashar al-Assad or Donald Trump. So I don't really have any choices to make in that direction. But I can change myself: I can take care that I don't add to the amount of anger and hate in the world. I can look for the secret patterns of peace which are to be found even in terrible situations and can refuse to despair. I can show solidarity with those who are actually suffering; in the present instance, I am lucky to have a dozen good Ukrainian friends staying in their country or recent refugees with whom I can correspond. They say that each loving contact with us brings a little bit more goodness and hope into their situation.

3. What does it mean to be a pacifist?

Pacifism is the work that seeks liberation from violence. Its many forms arise from people responding to the need for right relationships: with one another, with creation, with God.

- 3.1. Being a pacifist means having a commitment to non-violence and working to build peace. The pacifist stance will mean a commitment to working for a peaceful life in which we will be prepared to work for the reduction of conflict in ordinary situations, not just in situations involving violence and aggression. It means a respect for 'that of God in all people', which underlies our belief that it is wrong to kill. It follows that pacifists will be against the international arms trade in which profit is made from production and sale of lethal weapons – profit that will lead to the suffering of innocent people.
- 3.2. For me, it means both rejecting war and working for peace.
- 3.3. For me, it means learning to do conflict without violence; liberating ourselves from the culture of violence in which we are born and raised – the culture that teaches us that violence is normal. Of course, violence is a part of human nature, but so is nonviolence. And that is what we must learn and live. For me, pacifism is the work that seeks to liberate ourselves from violence and transform towards a nonviolent culture.
- 3.4. A pacifist is a peacemaker (*pacem facere*, in Latin) – and nothing to do with passivity (a different Latin root altogether). But the peace we are committed to trying to make is wider/ deeper than the old Roman concept of *pax*/ absence of conflict. It's more about 'shalom' – right relationships: with one another, with creation and with God.

4. Is the middle of a war the right time to be pacifist?

Even in a situation where armed force is the only resource left to a country to resist a greater evil, it is still important that there is a group of people within the country who focus on building peace – for the sake of the future.

- 4.1. It is always the right time to be a pacifist. During war our pacifist beliefs are tested but that does not mean we should not follow our truth in believing that it is wrong to kill and fight wars. The testing of our beliefs during a time of war may lead to the strengthening of our pacifism when we see the suffering of people and the adverse consequences. But the suffering of civilians (if not that of combatants) may lead us to question how we prevent further suffering and there are no easy answers to this. During World War II, many Quaker pacifists felt that it was important to maintain witness for peace in spite of such suffering.

I think it's the hardest time to witness but there are plenty of people to advocate adding fire to fire and very few to try to bring in a different dynamic. That said,

relative powerlessness is part of the human condition. The world is full of wars and they are all the product of militarism.

The middle of war is a hard time to be pacifist, especially when your government is involved. But, for me, it's the most important time because it presents us with hard challenges, thereby taking us deeper into our faith and testimony. It's a test of how rooted we are. That's why we're asking these tough questions and figuring our responses at this moment, right? Every generation needs to wrestle with this, and we need each other in these times to help us dig down and reconnect with our spiritual root. Being a pacifist in a time of war brings different value systems and cultures into sharp relief, and can help us and others wrestle with these deeper questions. If we are silent, there is no debate.

- 4.2. Would you be willing to say this to a conscientious objector in 1940? I would not. Even in a situation where I might agree that armed force is the only resource left to my country to resist a greater evil, it is still important that there is a group of people within the country who keep alive the pacifist dream – for the sake of the future. This is the Hebrew Bible concept of the Remnant – the small minority who remain faithful to God's way when the nation abandons it. They keep the flame alive and so are ready to rebuild Israel after the Day of Destruction. This idea is found in Isaiah and most of the Prophets.
- 4.3. We are not, ourselves, in the middle of a war right now. We cannot tell the Ukrainians how they should respond – we can only try to work out (and prepare for) how we might respond if something similar were to happen to us. Peace-making/ nonviolent resistance requires training and preparation, just as much as preparing and arming ourselves to kill.

5. What do you do about a war of aggression when one party won't leave well alone?

There are frequently peace groups that can be supported. We can train people to be present either physically, or in an advocacy role.

- 5.1. Protest! Seek allies and join with them. And do our best to get heard. Support and show solidarity for those on the receiving end; seek and support allies within the aggressive party to undermine the aggressive party's ruling elite...
- 5.2. We (governments) need to invest A LOT more time/ energy/ resources/ commitment into the exploration of nonviolent responses to conflict and, indeed, conflict prevention in the first place.
- 5.3. If we have people who are being constantly attacked and we won't fight back, then probably our role is to help people get away or to stand alongside them (literally or metaphorically) as they get attacked.

6. What to do when Putin doesn't care about international law?

Our role as Quakers is to stand our ground, express our faith and witness to a better way, a new normal, by working to create the conditions in which a positive world can be born.

- 6.1. As Quakers we continue to support international instruments, express our faith and witness to a better way, a new normal, and one that is life-affirming for all. We work to create the conditions in which a positive world can be born.
- 6.2. We have no access to Putin but we could campaign for a review of the impact of NATO's continuation rather than dissolution at the end of the Cold War.
- 6.3. ...or any other aggressive ruler! Violent, powerful people tend to disregard laws anyway, it's more about popular disengagement from the culture of violence, which the world sees as normal. Having said that, we must keep on asserting the law and seeking ways to strengthen it. At least we have a violence-reduction legal framework, which the world didn't have 150 years ago. International law itself came about through the efforts of those who sought to prevent further wars. But if you prepare for war, that's exactly what you'll get! For as long as rulers and their citizens hold faith in violence, we will have wars. Our role as Quakers is to stand our ground, express our faith and witness to a better way, a new normal, and one that is life-affirming for all. For me, our testimony is about working to create the conditions in which a positive world can be born. Living faithfully is not about winning or reaching our desired outcome. We don't control outcomes... and, actually, neither do the warmongers!

7. In armed conflicts those who take the pacifist stance stand back and can seem to allow others to fight on their behalf and deal with armed aggression and war crimes committed by dictators. Is this stance sustainable?

It's true that pacifists don't fight in ways that kill or harm people. Pacifists work continually in wartime and peace time, to relieve suffering and end the causes of war, so that peace is just and sustainable.

8. Can violence ever be justified? Is it ever right to weigh the benefits and harms of striking back?

Some Quakers have fought in wars, we don't judge people who use violence. Such activities are inevitable for as long as the causes of war, such as injustice and inequity, remain.

9. Would it have been right to tell Jews to surrender to Hitler in 1939? Likewise, is it acceptable to say to Palestinians, 'let the Israelis take away your land, your property, your livelihoods'?

No. Quakers don't see such actions as evidence for the grace of God operating in the world. We also support international humanitarian law for its attempt to set out principles and gain international sign up.

Nonviolent responses to war

10. Can Quaker mediators help or hinder diplomacy?

Quakers carefully explore the types of service they might offer. For example, this may be as intermediaries, providing a venue, building connections between those who cannot be seen to meet or other ways that peace can be grown.

- 10.1. That must depend on the circumstances and be intelligently and prayerfully considered. They must be humble and expendable and make sure they don't get in the way! We should act not to fill a need in ourselves but to be of genuine service.
- 10.2. Possibly both. We have to act in faith. We don't control outcomes, but we might assist in connecting hearts and minds. We have to try for peace, though we need to know what we are doing.
- 10.3. This question is conclusively answered in the literature; unofficial ('back-channel' or 'third-track') mediators have often played a necessary part in a peace process. In *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse, 1999) it says, 'At the softer end of the spectrum, third parties are often essential in contributing to issue transformations. They typically help the conflicting parties by putting them in contact with one another, gaining their trust and confidence, setting agendas, clarifying issues and formulating agreements. They can facilitate meetings by arranging venues, reducing tensions, exploring the interests of the parties and sometimes guiding the parties to unrealised possibilities.' Though not a Quaker book, the authors include Quaker informal mediation and shuttle diplomacy in Northern Ireland and South Africa among their examples (p. 159). Chris Mitchell's *The Structure of International Conflict* (1981) cites the Quaker mediation to end the Nigerian civil war in a case study of the path to peace (p. 289ff).
- 10.4. Friends emerge, and have the credibility to do such work in major conflicts (such as Sydney Bailey, Adam Curle, HW van der Merwe and others). It has also been undertaken by our institutions (QUNO, Quaker House Brussels, Quaker House Belfast, etc.) The international treaties banning child soldiers and landmines came about partly because Friends mediated between conflicting interests to bring governments to agreement.
- 10.5. We have, in the past, been known to help by a) providing 'safe'/ off the record space for parties to meet (sometimes around the edges of formal negotiations [Rhodesia/ Zimbabwe], or more often by preparing the ground with preliminary opportunities for off the record contact and trust building [Northern Ireland]) or b) 'good offices' – carrying messages between parties to the conflict who cannot be seen to meet/ talk to one another. This is very long-term, sensitive work and can certainly hinder rather than help, if we get it wrong. It can only be undertaken by invitation or with the genuine consent of all concerned, with profound humility and a willingness to let go of a desire for particular outcomes. In the past, it has usually built on some kind of previous involvement in a region – for example with relief, development or peace-building projects (of a kind we don't do anymore) – or with relevant institutions such as the UN.

- 10.6. What hasn't worked, in the past, is sending Quaker delegations off to speak to 'the people in charge' – kings, tsars, governments, Hitler. Though I don't imagine it hinders, either – it just gets ignored.

11. How should we (as Quakers) respond to those who commit evil acts, and who do not respond to non-violent attempts to get them to stop, and whose acts of evil are causing ongoing suffering?

If nonviolence is deemed to have failed, does that mean all that's left is violence? We try to respond with love and truth and bear witness to another way. We often stand lonely in a violent world, but standing is what we are impelled to do.

- 11.1. We should try to understand their position and motivation even if they have committed acts of great violence. But if we become involved in individual negotiation with such people we have to remain realistic and continuance of any discussion would require evidence or hope of a change in response, though we might not necessarily expect an apology or retraction of support for the previous violent acts. It is difficult to generalise our response, since the individual circumstances will vary e.g. what motivated the individuals concerned? Was there any justification for the violent acts, as there are examples of violent terrorists who have become peacebuilders?

We don't usually have any role in responding, even if we have an opinion. Which of us has access to President Putin? What has been the outcome of attempts at a military solution? And most of us, in interpersonal incidents, would have far greater nonviolent than violent power to prevent violence.

- 11.2. I'm remembering Jesus' example (Mark 3:23-27) in which he describes the tying up of the 'strong man' and taking away his possessions (power). Ultimately, I believe such people should have power taken away from them/ removed from areas of power, and be prevented for the rest of their lives from returning to places of power and influence. That cannot happen unless there is a strong enough culture that discourages and restricts this behaviour. There are national and international frameworks in place for this, all it requires is a popular and political will to make them effective.
- 11.3. Evil succeeds because its opposition is not strong enough. When we look at the world today, we see a rise in authoritarian, often violent, national 'leaders' who have muscled their way to power. They have been allowed to do so. Our response is to help strengthen the resistance. Doing nothing, or participating in the system that produces them, makes us complicit.
- 11.4. In a culture of peace, there are effective checks and balances: in a pyramid power structure to prevent such people reaching power, and then, if they slip through, remove them. (We might also envision a power structure that is not pyramidal). Our task is to contribute to the creation of/ or strengthening the culture of peace, and not acceding to violence by, say, supporting the execution of people who command such ongoing acts of evil.

- 11.5. This question implies that if nonviolence is deemed to have failed, all that's left is violence. I find it curious that I've never heard the same question in relation to violent resistance that consistently fails. For e.g. civil wars that rage for years or decades.
- 11.6. Brutal oppressors tend to be better at violence than us. If 'genuine and persistent nonviolent attempts' are not effective, we need to create new nonviolent methods that are effective. There is compelling evidence analysing 200 years of struggle across the world, to show that nonviolent resistance to violent repression is twice as successful as violent resistance. There are strategies, such as civilian-based defence, that have been highly effective. Sadly, nonviolence doesn't get the same heroic air play as violence – think films, games, books, the writing of history, all telling the story of redemptive violence (justifiable Good Violence). The military imagination can be tediously limited, but in nonviolence we have our endless creativity, mischief and love.
- 11.7. Our insistence of nonviolence is necessary for as long as there is insistence on violence. We have to respond with love and truth and bear witness to another way. We often stand lonely in a violent world, but standing is what we are impelled to do. That is our testimony.
- 11.8. The first thing to say is that adhering to our peace testimony does NOT mean doing nothing in response to violent conflict – standing by helplessly or passing by on the other side. But the range of what one can do varies, according to the phase the conflict is in. On this point, I find the 'hourglass' model of conflict response really helpful, as referenced in Ellis Brooks' blog for UCL on 22nd February. Both before and after the pinch-point of open warfare, there are many things we can offer. But once war has actually 'broken out' – once people have started killing and being killed – our options are far fewer. We can, certainly, try to 'care for the victims' (these days that probably means sending money to relief organisations, rather than joining an ambulance unit or Medecins sans Frontieres ourselves). We can welcome refugees. We can reach out to those affected by the conflict – on all sides – and especially those (who are always there, in every violent situation) who are trying to resist hatred and rebuild relationships. We can witness/ pay attention/ name what we're seeing. We can pray/ 'hold in the Light' both the situation and all those caught up in it. We can ask the key questions, such as 'how can we/ our leaders best act to get out of where we are now and into a position where the killing can stop and some kind of sustainable peace can be built/ rebuilt?'

More specifically: Should we turn to violence, if nonviolent responses don't seem to be stopping someone from committing evil acts and people are suffering? Many would (and some Quakers certainly have, in WWII for example). But I think the peace testimony makes it clear that we are called to find another way. Nonviolent responses – sanctions, for example, or nonviolent civilian resistance – take longer than violent ones. But do they enable an outcome that is more just and sustainable in the long run?

Should we 'show careful tolerance' towards those carrying out violent acts or take action against them to prevent them from doing more? Both sides of this dichotomous choice need unpacking. 'Careful'? well yes – if by 'careful' we mean full of care for the people involved – all of them, including the perpetrators of violence. But 'tolerance'? No. It's not about 'tolerating' either the person or their deeds. We need be clear that the actions themselves are intolerable – but that the person committing them is my equal as a child of God, capable of change/ capable

of better choices. Adam Curle (who spent a lot of time talking with violent men) is very good on these dilemmas.... And yes, we need to be taking action against that person, if we can, to prevent them from doing more. But not (if we can help it) violent action. In reality, every conflict situation will spark a mix of violent and nonviolent responses – we need to put our energies, as Quakers, into the nonviolent ones

War and weapons

12. Is the invasion of Ukraine qualitatively different from other wars e.g. the 2003 Iraq war or the war in Yemen?

War is a repeating product of cultures that use domination so this one is no different. We are giving this war more attention because we have some existing links in the region and recognise that many other wars are not receiving attention.

- 12.1. Maybe not, since the news reporting from Yemen has not been as extensive as in the Ukrainian conflict, so we have seen less of the violence. The British response has been more supportive to displaced people from Ukraine, for reasons that we can only speculate on and this seems to reflect that we care more about the victims in Ukraine. Being in Europe, the Ukrainian conflict seems closer to us but there is evidence of similar atrocities in the Syrian conflict and in the Yemen.
- 12.2. No. It's the same product of a culture of violent domination. It repeats itself ad infinitum.
- 12.3. I think that there is a difference, which goes beyond the way that the UK public is responding differently to the plight of Ukrainian refugees compared to how it perceives refugees from other conflicts.
- 12.4. In many conflicts over the past 30 years or so in which the UK is involved directly or indirectly (which is all that a significant section of the UK public will now remember) there has been a strong minority, sometimes majority, public perception that the UK and usually the US is 'wrong', that they are involved for deeply self-serving interests – e.g. oil, anti Bin Laden/ISIS etc. – and that for many the UK/US/west is the aggressor or at least getting involved in deeply questionable ways. Think of Iraq or the opposition to sending planes to Syria. This ambiguity is also there in media coverage of the conflicts. So, in a way it has been relatively straightforward, even if not necessarily successful, for many in Quakers and the peace movement to argue against UK involvement, to point to the use of UK made arms inflicting destruction and suffering on civilians, etc.

With the Ukraine situation the public debate has swung in a different direction – is the UK doing enough, should NATO be providing more arms, surely you have to fight when an armed aggressor invades you, isn't it only because Ukraine is putting up armed resistance that they have not already been annexed, shouldn't Ukraine be admitted into NATO, is it too callous for NATO to say that they won't impose a no-fly zone even if this escalates the situation, how can the west stand by and watch innocent civilians being killed, etc.? I don't see much critical media coverage. And there is so far mainly only questioning of UK/western inactivity rather than examples of the destructive effects of UK involvement. (Compared to Yemen where pieces of UK made weapons are being reported on). And it does hark back to the now folk memory of WWII, where the UK was 'standing up' against an armed aggressive invader who was riding roughshod over 'sovereign nations'; and inflicting various horrors and suffering.

So, in this situation, the usual peace movement and popular minority response that problematizes the UK and wider arms trade, and the role of the UK and western military needs to adapt and be able to engage with different questions.

- 12.5. When last year I was telling some of my fellow villagers that I had been witnessing at the DSEI arms fair, the reaction tended to be, it's not ideal, but if we don't sell the arms to these nasty people then someone else will, and at least it supports British jobs. Now I suspect the response would be why on earth would you be so inhumane and callous, not to mention naive, as to wish to stop us supporting those in need?
- 12.6. I think we have to acknowledge that it 'feels' different. It's easy to see who 'the Bad Guys' are, and for once, they're not us (or our allies – or the recipients of our arms exports). Like the first Gulf War, there is a clear breach here of the UN charter by a single aggressor state (but, unlike the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, this is a case where the Security Council is rendered powerless to respond because of the P5 veto power of Russia and China. So the US and EU are doing so instead, with military aid but also – as the UN did with Kuwait – with non-military sanctions). The war in Yemen (like the wars in Libya, Syria, etc.) is different again, because wars like these involve superpower meddling in what are basically civil conflicts/ armed rebellions. So yes, these armed conflicts are qualitatively different in their origins, their dynamics and the moral 'rightness' or otherwise of the parties involved.
- 12.7. But war is war. It involves deciding to defend some people's lives and what they value by destroying the lives of others. Sometimes it can feel like the only option (and it is certainly not our place to tell the Ukrainians what to do in the face of what they're facing). But for ourselves, as Quakers, we are called to reject the use of violence to answer violence and actively to seek other ways of dealing with conflict, including armed conflict, and its aftermath.
- 12.8. It is no different in terms of the human suffering, which is the same regardless of where it happens. But it is different in terms of the challenge it poses to the international order underpinned by the UN and state sovereignty: possibly even more than the 2003 Iraq invasion, it's a naked invasion of one state by another with no invitation or support from the government and no UN resolution authorising it. The risk beyond the specifics of the violence in Ukraine is that it undermines the limitations on state action and international obligations that the UN system has tried to implement.

13. Are smart weapons morally the same as weapons of mass destruction (WMDs)?

International law makes some distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable weapons or levels of killing. Quakers reject the whole concept of killing each other and advocate for transformative nonviolent solutions.

- 13.1. One sort is just the other write large. WMDs are not qualitatively worse but quantitatively. And, of course 'smart weapons' are not as smart as they're made out to be – can kill wedding parties as well as targeted individuals. The main point is that they are all part of the terrible system of power through capacity to kill. I understand the term 'weapon' to be an instrument for harming or killing. All weapons then are products of a mindset that is counter to peace testimony. This question is about scale: what are acceptable and unacceptable levels of killing. There is a debate about indiscriminate and discriminate killing but only among those that accept the concept of necessary killing, e.g. Just War, or Good Violence (ours) vs Bad Violence (theirs). WMDs represent the logical extension of the violence culture. There may well be gradations of morality here for those who can draw these lines (are they fixed?), but it's not a debate that involves Quakers and peace testimony, except to reject the whole concept and advocate for a different way of being.
- 13.2. Yes. Killing people is wrong. Smart weapons kill fewer people, perhaps – and WMDs kill not only those targeted by also future generations, and non-human life as well. But they are part of the same spectrum of response, the decision to use violence, so morally the same.
- 13.3. WMDs are inherently indiscriminate – you can't differentiate between civilians and military. Smart weapons claim to be precise; the extent to which they actually are is disputed, and there is always the risk that the information used to decide what to target may be wrong, or they attack a military target in a location that also includes civilians (e.g. an apartment block).
- 13.4. This kind of remote killing desensitises us to the brutal reality of war. Most humans have to be thoroughly trained to overcome an (innate?) aversion to personally and physically attacking a complete stranger with a deadly weapon... Smart weapons have a psychologically sanitising effect for the (usually safe and very distant) operator.

14. Can or should Quakers take an interest in defence policy?

Yes, to help us understand and engage with the challenges, assumptions and dilemmas of the military perspective. This assists our work in examining accepted concepts of security, and developing and demonstrating nonviolent alternatives.

- 14.1. Yes. From our peace testimony and the opposition to war, we would argue that we have more weapons than we need and beyond that needed solely for any defence purposes. We also have moral objections to nuclear weapons and many of the modern weapons such as drones. We would also argue that armament production, has a negative impact in terms of global warming and harm to the environment. So our testimony to the earth and sustainability will affect our views on defence policy. I think some of us may want to focus on engagement with politicians, military personnel and analysts, while others want to focus on engaging with 'ordinary people', through personal conversations, written communications, demonstrations or civil resistance. We 'testify', as led, where we feel we can be most effective.
- 14.2. Yes, for the purposes of understanding the challenges, assumptions and dilemmas of the military mind. And to attempt informed dialogue. This assists our work in examining accepted concepts of security, and developing and demonstrating nonviolent alternatives. Many dilemmas facing the military are also dilemmas for us. We should remember, though, that defence policy is predicated upon protecting the status quo of power within and beyond the state. Thabo Mbeki asked Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge to be his Deputy Minister of Defence in the post-apartheid South African government precisely because she was a Quaker.
- 14.3. Why not (if you have the interest and aptitude)? During the Cold War, there were some fascinating discussions/ explorations around what a truly 'defensive' UK defence policy might look like, and how it might be gradually shifted/ transformed from reliance on military force to a comprehensive programme of training in unarmed civilian resistance. But the aim (as with Quaker work on child soldiers/ age of recruitment or human rights criteria for arms exports) should always be to shift thinking and resources away from conventional, violent responses to conflict and towards diplomacy, 'soft power' and conflict prevention.

NATO

15. What would we do without NATO?

'I speak not against any magistrates or peoples defending themselves against foreign invasions... for this the present [state] of things may and doth require... but yet there is a better state which nations are to expect and travel towards...' Isaac Penington

- 15.1. Launch a major programme to create a Europe that is built on the principle of inclusive cooperation.
- 15.2. Hopefully spend more money on socially necessary things. Personally, I'd have a big party! NATO is a product of the military mindset and the system of violent domination, in which military power is built up against a perceived opponent who then feels bound to build up its own military response. It's founded on the assumption that security is ultimately attained through military means, and usually ends in a big bang. It's really nothing to do with Quaker peace testimony.
- 15.3. It is helpful to reflect on Quaker Faith & Practice 24.21, where Isaac Penington writes, 'I speak not against any magistrates or peoples defending themselves against foreign invasions... for this the present [state] of things may and doth require... but yet there is a better state which nations are to expect and travel towards... This blessed state, which shall be brought forth [in society] at large in God's season, must begin in [individuals].'
- 15.4. There may be a need for NATO in today's circumstances. It is not the problem in itself, but it is one symptom of an international order based on rivalry, fear, mistrust and greed. The most hopeful sign that this is not inevitable is the existence of the United Nations and its founding principles, to which all members pay lip-service – and there are aspects of the current inter-national response to the Russian invasion which prove that those principles remain a real and potent hope.

Spiritual dimensions of the peace testimony

16. Is the peace testimony a personal or a political position? Can it be both?

Yes. Quakers have a testimony or witness to the grace of God in our work for peace. It is an affirmation and evidence of a deep conviction. We hold the source of such conviction in such esteem that to live truthfully, we may need to act personally or politically.

- 16.1. Like any of the personal beliefs we hold as Quakers, our response to the Peace Testimony is personal and comes from the leadings of the Spirit to each of us and our conscience. (Hence the diverse responses of Quakers in WWI and WWII.) Our position on the peace testimony will lead us to political positions since this may be in opposition to Government actions or the views of the majority of people. So our individual stance on the Peace Testimony is both personal and political, with the political stance being an unavoidable result of us acting on our beliefs.

It must surely be a personal conviction on the basis of beliefs, while those beliefs to be held may, for some of us at least, need to be related to our understanding of what will really work for the good of humanity and the planet.

My understanding of testimony is that it is a profound spiritual insight, discovered through the experience of worship and prayer, and shared by a number of people whose lives and external actions are similarly guided by it. Yes, it is personally experienced, and its outward expression may be seen as political. Peace testimony, though, is an expression of faith, our deepest religious understanding, and manifested as a collective witness to another way of being.

- 16.2. It is my understanding – and experience – that the peace testimony (like all Friends' testimonies) is essentially a personal (or community) witness, but one with political consequences (just as the choice to do nothing, or conform to the norms of 'the world the way it is', has political consequences). And in any case, as any feminist will tell you, the personal is always political...

But a testimony is not a 'position'. It is a consistent body of actions and words, arising from 'the promptings of love and truth in our hearts', which gives evidence (witness/ testimony) to the world that another reality is possible and thus seeks to transform it. Our testimonies are a way (in theological language) to 'bring in the Kingdom by living the Kingdom' or (in the language of active nonviolence) to bring the future into the present, modelling the world we want tomorrow in the way we live and act today. The peace testimony is the testimony which shows us how to deal with the conflict that such witness inevitably provokes.

17. Do you faithfully maintain our testimony that war and the preparation for war are inconsistent with the spirit of Christ?

We try...

17.1. As Quakers I think that we should uphold this and we might use the justification of what Christ said in the Gospels. George Fox wrote that the cause of war was envious people who love themselves more than God, and people who lust after other people's lives and property (This seems to derive from the James's epistle.) But even when we try to uphold this testimony there are situations in which it may not seem the right thing to do and it is easier to hold such views in the abstract than if it is our own relatives or innocent civilians who are on the receiving end of violence and aggression. In such situations is it right to stand by and do nothing? Have we not failed if such violence is already happening? In WWI and WWII some Quakers took an absolutist view and would have nothing to do with war or its preparation. Others decided to enlist and fight, whilst some were prepared to provide humanitarian relief on the battlefield. This indicates some space for the operation of individual conscience.

17.2. I try to.

17.3. There it is, peace testimony in one beautiful question. It's a question we should prompt ourselves with daily. It's what I try to live by ... often fail, but keep trying.

18. Can I remain in Quaker membership if I feel that the pacifist approach is the wrong approach to take in relation to Ukraine?

Differing views can be held tenderly within a Quaker Meeting. We gather to discover a shared sense of what love asks of us. This is not likely to be the ending of a membership.

The questions were collected from Quakers via public and private channels, following the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. A group of Quakers who had long experience of living/working in Russia and or Ukraine, or had been active in international peacebuilding in conflict zones was convened. They ran four Quaker sessions in summer of 2022 to make it possible for any Quaker to share and sit with questions they were struggling with.

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