

Discussion Guide for Friends

Shared Security: Reimagining U.S. Foreign Policy

A Working Paper of the American Friends Service Committee
and Friends Committee on National Legislation

April 2013



**American Friends
Service Committee**

Discussion Guide for Friends

Our principle is, and our practices have always been, to seek peace, and ensue it, and to follow after righteousness and the knowledge of God, seeking the good and welfare, and doing that which tends to the peace of all.

—GEORGE FOX, DECLARATION TO CHARLES II, 1660

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) invite Friends to join in putting forward a new vision of how the U.S. might more effectively engage with the world. We believe this vision must be grounded in recognition of the Divine Light within each person and a fundamental understanding that our safety and security as communities, nations, and peoples are interdependent and intricately linked to the health and sustainability of the earth's ecosystem.

Shared Security, a new joint working paper of AFSC and FCNL, discusses some of the current realities that make such a shift in U.S. policy an urgent imperative, and proposes initial steps for positive change. This discussion guide can serve as a starting point for Friends to engage with each other, as well as with their broader communities and policymakers, in opening conversations and exploring paths of action to reshape U.S. policy to be more effective and ethical in a world of shared security.

This document is the result of a long and careful process of discernment. An initial draft was shared with a small group of Friends who have direct experience internationally and with U.S. foreign policy, and their input greatly improved the text. Then, in April 2013, AFSC and FCNL invited a diverse group of Friends to a small consultation at Pendle Hill to review and reflect upon the document. The discussions resulted in a further revised version, which we are now distributing widely among Friends, along with a number of suggestions for follow-up discussions and concrete action toward the goals outlined in the paper.

The Pendle Hill consultation also approved the following epistle to all Friends:

April 6, 2013

To Friends Everywhere:

Responding to an invitation from Friends Committee on National Legislation and the American Friends Service Committee, thirty-four of us gathered for “Reimagining U.S. Foreign Policy,” a consultation based on a working paper envisioning a Quaker approach to foreign policy.

In our time together at Pendle Hill, surrounded by the signs of spring and the wellsprings of spirituality in this beautiful place, we felt a renewed purpose. In two days of worship, conversation, singing, and work together, we had a sense of being invited to name something whose time has come. Still, we know that what we see here is only beginning to arise, and will need the prayerful and active support of many others who were not present in the room.

We recognize that we live in a dramatically changed and changing world, one with perils for many but also fresh possibilities. What we do now can make a significant difference. In this new context, we affirm our longstanding Peace Testimony, but realize that if it is to live and speak today it must be a call to build shared security for the human community and the commonwealth of all life. We must move beyond “War is Not the Answer” toward providing positive understandings of a new foreign policy.

This vision of shared security animated our discussions as we explored the possibilities of a world characterized by consistent respect for the worth and dignity of all people. Shared security frames an approach characterized by peaceful engagement in conflict, sustainable economies and wise stewardship of creation, global cooperation, rule of law, and restorative justice. Beyond asking, “how should the U.S. relate to the rest of the world?” we want to ask on behalf of all who live in this world, “what do we need the conditions of our common life to be?”

This gathering was one early step. As we move forward grounded in the faith and practice of Friends, we rededicate ourselves to continuing to embrace the diverse voices and gifts of our global community of Quakers, and to deepening the participation and leadership of our younger members.

God has given us good work to do. We invite Friends and others to join us.

How to Use the Discussion Guide for Shared Security

This discussion guide is intended to help Friends begin conversations around the AFSC-FCNL joint publication, *Shared Security*, within their meetings and churches or with like-minded groups. It provides queries and suggestions for using the document. We approach these issues first from our own faith and practice. From there, this publication seeks to stimulate discussion on what a new U.S. global policy would look like.

By opening a dialogue about the challenges and opportunities for reshaping U.S. policy toward a vision of shared security, we hope Friends and others can improve upon the ideas in the document, stimulate new thinking, and develop specific ideas for action within their communities and with policymakers.

This publication is a beginning, not an end. We do not have all the answers. We hope to encourage a creative and humble discussion about how the U.S. can engage with the world as we seek to find shared solutions to shared problems. We hope to explore alternatives to militarism as a foreign policy. We hope these conversations will inspire action and encourage new initiatives to reshape U.S. foreign policy in a world dominated by war and hungry for peace.

We invite you to help envision—and create—a new U.S. global policy for living in the world we seek. We hope this booklet will stimulate dialogue, spark new ideas, confirm long-held beliefs, raise new questions, and encourage action to help change the policies and actions of our government. We encourage you to send feedback, share the pamphlet with others, and bring these proposals directly to policymakers.

We invite you to visit www.sharedsecurity.org, as well as www.afsc.org and www.fcnl.org, to engage with us in this ongoing conversation.

Here are some ideas for using the document and the queries that follow. Please send us other suggestions you may have.

- Start a *Shared Security* study circle at your monthly meeting or church. Meet together over a few months to discuss the document and ideas that arise from it. Develop a minute to bring before the meeting or church for consideration.
- Hold a discussion session on the document as part of religious education classes, youth groups, or peace and social concerns committee business.
- Organize a discussion session or event for your whole meeting or church community. Invite other faith groups to participate.
- Create an interest group or workshop on shared security at quarterly or yearly meeting sessions. Invite AFSC and/or FCNL staff as resource people or speakers.
- Reach out to local allies such as peace groups, Rotary or Kiwanis Clubs, other faith groups, schools and universities, and foreign policy associations. Organize discussions and public events about shared security. Invite your members of Congress to participate.
- Choose one idea or proposal from *Shared Security* to explore in more depth with your meeting or church. Raise your concerns and proposals for policy changes on that issue with your Congressional representatives through letters and in-district lobby visits.
- Write an op-ed column or letter to the editor of your local newspaper on the idea of shared security and how U.S. foreign policy needs to change.
- Share the document at local peace fairs and community gatherings and invite people into conversation about it.

Queries: What Canst Thou Say?

The following queries are offered as possible starting points for reflection or discussion by Friends. We encourage you to shape your own queries on shared security and share them with us as well.

- *How does our faith and experience of God inform a vision of shared security? How are we called to act as Friends to help reshape U.S.-global relationships?*
- *How can Friends' understanding of the Divine, or Inner Christ, speak to the fears, beliefs, interests, and assumptions about the U.S. role in the world, as reflected in our current foreign policy?*
- *How do Friends' testimonies and experience lead us to address the problems facing our world today—environmental crisis, war and violence, poverty and inequality, disease and crime?*
- *Do we believe we are called by the Spirit to end war? How might that happen? What steps could we take now that could lay a path to abolishing war?*
- *How does Friends' peace testimony address (or not) the challenging questions about use of international force in dealing with mass violence and genocide?*
- *Does the testimony of simplicity, and the practice of Quaker business ethics, provide insight to help understand, imagine, and create sustainable, thriving economies in today's world?*
- *What role can Friends play in addressing the planetary crisis facing our world? How can we be examples of a new relationship with the earth through our own lives and help light a path toward broad policy changes?*
- *How can we work to address these great challenges through our meetings, our churches and in our own communities? How do we respond to the call to help mend a broken world beyond our borders?*
- *How can we work for global policy change as part of putting our faith into action?*
- *How can programs of peace education within our meetings and churches, among Quaker schools and colleges, and in the broader educational community address these important issues?*
- *How can we, our organizations, meetings, and churches, articulate and actively work toward a new vision of U.S. foreign policy?*
- *Who are our partners in this endeavor and how can we collaborate with them?*

We are grateful to all those who helped shape and contributed to this project. These include, but are not limited to:

Readers

Nicole Bivans Collins
Helena Cobban
Ed Dreby
John Feffer
Lon Fendall
Jim Fine
Welling Hall
Keith Helmuth
Mary Lord
Jim Matlack
George Parker
Ed Snyder
Joe Volk
Susan Waltz
Jean Zaru

Pendle Hill Consultation Participants

Jose Aguto
Jill Anderson
David Atwood
Noah Baker Merrill
Wendy Batson
Doug Bennett
David Bucura
Ernestine Buscemi
Erik Cleven
Renata Cobbs Fletcher
Shan Cretin
Anna Crumley-Effinger
Lucy Duncan
Richard Erstad
Martin Garate
Kate Gould
Doug Guthrie
David Hartsough
David Henkel
Aura Kanegis
Kerri Kennedy
Matthew Levinger
Shoshanna Matney
Bridget Moix
Kenneth Oye
Diane Randall
Diana Roose
Michael Shank
Michael Snarr
Matt Southworth
Andrew Tomlinson
Sue Williams
Alissa Wilson

For more information and to request additional copies, contact:



**American Friends
Service Committee**

American Friends Service Committee
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 241-7000
www.afsc.org



Friends Committee on National Legislation
245 Second Street NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 547-6000
www.fcnl.org