

# Education in Worldviews

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Events in Ukraine will dominate the news at local, national and international levels. My team and I have been engaged with constituents whose family or contacts are exposed to daily dangers, often facing heart-breaking decisions on whether to fight or to flee, while still possible.

We need to help those who aid others in their distress. Across too much of the world, there are more-or-less hospitable neighbours who take in refugees. There were truly awful numbers at the end of the Second World War.

The Palestine diaspora nearly overwhelmed Jordan. More recently the botched approach to Syria during the 2010-2015 UK coalition government preceded great numbers of deaths and a greater number dispersed, many to Turkey.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has over 17,000 staff working in 135 countries, helping to care for over 20 million people. I respect the local efforts of volunteers and faith groups supporting vulnerable refugees, individuals and families, on the south coast.

The greatest numbers have been during nation building and disputes within countries, including in the sub-continent, China and Hong Kong seventy years ago, in north Africa and later further south. The Americas have many with refugee status or in equivalent distress.

During our lifetimes, many countries gained the opportunity to choose peaceful development, more flexible government and economic systems and good relations with neighbours.

This week started for me in the Great Hall at Westminster at a British Irish Parliamentary Assembly. Members of political parties who forty years ago were barely civil with each other have not reached agreement on important issues but they will now meet regularly and listen to each other with courtesy. It is part of what I call coming to terms with history.

The next development on Tuesday was my responsibility to chair the parliamentary roundtable on religious education, a subject that is part of the basic curriculum though oddly not part of the National Curriculum. There is an informative House of Commons Library Briefing Paper 2019, Number 7167 available online.

Most parents want their children to understand religion and world views. It is sad that successive governments failed to encourage a flow of qualified teachers of religious education, not faith indoctrinators.

School and college leaders will be aware of the report by Charles Clarke and Professor Linda Woodhead on a new settlement on religion in schools. There was then the Commission on RE's report: Religion and World Views. That can be read with the Report on Religious Education Provision, produced by NATRE, the Religious Education Council of England and Wales.

Every week in our schools, I believe teachers are fairly and helpfully leading our students and pupils towards greater understanding. Developing faith is more for families and communities. In the public arena, I am confident that local faith leaders and representatives of atheists and agnostics can agree what should properly be in the syllabus. I would welcome a synagogue in Worthing and I hope for a modern mosque.

When I consider the wrongs that have been done around the world when national rulers tried to eliminate organised religion, and when remembering the excesses of one faith or type of faith when trying to impose a majority view on a minority, I shudder.

Learning together and being open to views other than those exclusively in a single tradition can help to reduce the chances of violent oppression. It would be farcical to attribute President Putin's excesses to his school years. It is sensible to realise that the more our own succeeding generations know what had mattered most in our own traditions, the less likely that ignorance or apathy rule hearts and heads.