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# **Is Nuclear Deterrence Morally Defensible? Religious Perspectives**

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For a few years, the Holy See critics against nuclear weapons and the Vatican's calls in favor of disarmament have been very visible and have led to a new round of analysis and reflection in circles working on strategic issues. This renewed interest, which was in all probability increased by the media coverage generally conferred to Pope Francis, is also linked to the Church's declarations in themselves, which show a slight evolution of its position and a clearer moral condemnation of nuclear deterrence.

This focus is also the proof that far from being a purely anecdotal issue reserved to theology experts, the compatibility between nuclear deterrence and religious ethics can have a very concrete impact on strategic realities. In a more direct way, the Pope's message to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons tends to reinforce the credibility and exposure of groups calling for immediate disarmament measures and believing that nuclear-weapon states do not fulfill the commitments taken under Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). More deeply, it seems that the religious factor still plays (or something plays again) an important role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in terms of geopolitics. In many places in the world, religious speeches are linked to nationalism and used to explain part of the geostrategic interests of nations, but also in a way define their behavior on the world stage. This influence does not spare the seemingly very cold and rational positioning towards nuclear weapons, as seen by the decision in 1998 of the nationalist and Hinduist party BJP to make official the nuclear-weapon status of India or the fatwa of Ayatollah Khamenei forbidding Iran to build a nuclear weapon.

Even if in many states, religion plays a less and less important role and is considered a private and personal matter, in others, it remains an essential key to define individual as well as national identity. In that regard, it still participates, with more or less intensity, in the determination of dominant values in a given society, such as justice, liberty, proselytism, universalism or on the contrary the singularity of a religious community, tolerance, pacifism, or non-violence, values that can shape the image that a country projects on the international stage but also its behavior on the world stage<sup>1</sup>. Religious beliefs and declarations made by clergymen are obviously only one of many other factors leading to the formation of national identities, and national identities play only a part in the decisions made by States regarding nuclear weapons (security conditions are clearly a major determinant.) But this role is not insignificant. As the Catholic Church in particular is experiencing new momentum on the debate of the morality of nuclear weapons, which leads it to reconsider the conclusions drawn at the beginning of the 1980s, during a major brainstorming on this issue among Christian denominations (and especially Catholics), it is useful to analyze the views expressed by other major religions on the compatibility of nuclear deterrence as well as their teachings.

With a short overview of the religious traditions most influenced by the nuclear questions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism), this paper tries to show that as often happens with the issue of nuclear deterrent, realities are more complex than preconceived ideas could make believe. It shows that on this matter as on

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<sup>1</sup> See in particular the analysis of national interests by Maria Rost Rublee in her analysis of the choice made by States to launch – or not – a nuclear program.

Maria Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint*, University of Georgia Press, Athens, 2009.

many others, religions are impacted by geostrategic dynamics which explains some evolutions in their positioning, and even different views expressed by similar communities facing different realities. This study also aims at giving basics and background information to anticipate the stands of various religious authorities, as well as the impact that they could have on policies made in nuclear-weapon States.

## Nuclear weapons morality and Judaism

Judaism is confronted to the question of the morality of nuclear weapons on several counts. First, Israel, the Jewish State, is a nuclear-weapon State even if it is not officially recognized according to the adopted opacity doctrine. Second, there are influential Jewish communities in other nuclear-weapon States, and in particular in the United States, who have participated in debates on the morality of deterrence during and after the Cold War. On a more trivial note, many of the nuclear weapon founding fathers and pioneers of nuclear physics – from Albert Einstein to Robert Oppenheimer, including Edward Teller – shared a Jewish heritage and culture, which, at the individual level, gives a perspective on the ethical choices they made, at a time marked by the trauma of the mass destructions committed during the Shoah. The answers made by the Jewish tradition and modern commentators are diverse and express many nuances.

The analysis of fundamental texts of the Jewish faith gives a few keys. It should be noted first and foremost that even if the Isaiah prophecy invites to forge plowshares out of swords (Isaiah, 2:4), the sacred books do not prone pacifism and even indicate that some wars are compulsory, especially those waged in self-defense (Exodus, 22:1).<sup>2</sup> The Deuteronomy gives some rules on how to pursue a conflict, forbidding for instance to cut down fruit trees or mandating that a surrender offer should be made before laying siege to a city (Deuteronomy, 20:1-20).<sup>3</sup> On the other end, the Talmud invites to respect the principle of proportionality in assaults.

From these few guiding rules, but also from the rich interpretative tradition of the Jewish faith, which carries a lot of weight in contemporary Jewish ethics, and its re-contextualization within dominant moral values and humanitarian laws recognized by all<sup>4</sup>, modern Jewish thinkers have drawn several conclusions regarding nuclear weapons.

In the wake of the Holocaust, many Jewish thinkers shared the ethics of David Ben-Gurion on the necessity to have a self-defense capacity, and thought that Jewish communities had the moral imperative to defend themselves thanks to nuclear

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<sup>2</sup> Asa Kasner, “Jewish Ethics and War,” in eds. Elliot N. Dorff and Jonathan K. Crane, *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Ethics and Morality*, Oxford University Press, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Norman Solomon, “Judaism and the ethics of war,” *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 87, n° 858, June 2005.

<sup>4</sup> The Deuteronomy does not mandate to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants, and even orders to slaughter male civilians, which is nowadays universally prohibited. The Talmud gives directives for “mandatory” or “allowed” war for a King of the Jews according to edits taken by a Grand Priest who disappeared centuries ago. Jewish intellectuals and theologians recognize the need to take into account the context to interpret sacred texts and draw from them moral maxims. (See Norman Solomon, “Judaism and the ethics of war.”)

deterrence, and thus, despite a strong aversion for any idea of mass destruction.<sup>5</sup> The question evolved when major powers started to build arsenals able to destroy all lives on earth. In the famous debate “Red or Dead?”, Rabbi Maurice Lamm argued that it was moral to think about humanity sacrificing itself rather than living under communist rule. In answer, Immanuel Jakobovits defended that the destruction of the human race went well beyond what the Talmud mandated as a defensive war and was therefore not compatible with the Jewish ethics, though he judged that retaining nuclear weapons for deterrence was not immoral.<sup>6</sup> During the Cold War, many theologians adopted the view that destroying humanity could never be moral, and talked against the risk of “omnicide,” recalling human responsibility to preserve life as commanded by the First Alliance<sup>7</sup> and more concretely, calling for arms control measures.<sup>8</sup>

There seems to be a consensus on the fact that a moral war, according to Jewish ethics, must respect some rules. It must not be waged if it can be avoided, must give an opportunity for the enemy to opt for peace, care about non-combatants and abstain from destroying the divine creation. Moreover, Jewish soldiers need to be informed of the rules of war – and apply them.<sup>9</sup> On the basis of these principles, a nuclear war of annihilation does not seem to be consistent with Judaism,<sup>10</sup> but a more limited use of atomic weapons does not seem prohibited. Using this framework, Walter S. Wurzburger suggested that if the use of nuclear weapons had to be ruled out to avoid the extinction of the human race, it would be immoral to discard the ability to defend oneself and deter a nuclear attack, implying that “we have no choice but to continue to rely on the threat of nuclear retaliation to deter nuclear aggression.” Multilateral arms control and the adoption of no-first-use pledges could make this “lesser evil” more acceptable.<sup>11</sup> Moshe Halbertal insisted on the moral complexity of the dilemma, arguing that it was difficult to legitimate retaliatory strikes but that preemptive nuclear attacks could be justified, for instance on Iranian nuclear facilities, to avoid a “second Holocaust.”<sup>12</sup>

Logically, Israeli theologians have been less talkative on the subject than their American colleagues, as the censorship surrounding the question of nuclear weapons in Israel is not conducive to an open debate. Nonetheless, a few voices discussed Tel-

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<sup>5</sup> Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Maurice Lamm, “Red or Dead? An Attempt at Formulating a Jewish Attitude, Tradition,” *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*, vol. 4, n°2, spring 1962, pp. 165-209.

<sup>7</sup> God having promised to Noah not to exterminate again humankind after the Deluge thanks to the rainbow sign (Genesis, 9:11.)

<sup>8</sup> Joseph E. David, “Between the Bible and the Holocaust: three sources for Jewish perspectives on mass destruction,” in ed. Sohail H. Hashmi and Steven P. Lee, *Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction, Religious and Secular Perspectives*, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Rabbi David Saperstein, *Preventing the Nuclear Holocaust a Jewish Response*, UAHC for the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, Anon, 1983.

<sup>10</sup> Pinchas Peli, “Torah and Weapons of Mass Destruction: A View from Israel,” in ed. David Landes, *Confronting Omnicide: Jewish Reflections on Weapons of Mass Destruction*, Northvale NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Walter S. Wurzburger, “Nuclear Deterrence and Nuclear War,” in ed. David Landes.

<sup>12</sup> Ron Rosenbaum, *How the End Begins, The Road to A Nuclear World War III*, Simon & Schuster, London, 2011.



Aviv's legitimacy to insure its survival thanks to nuclear deterrence, and some have shown that the threat, if not the use of these weapons, could be justified.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, even for communities living out of Israel, the Talmudic rule saying that "the law of the country is the law" remains essential, and religious authorities have not questioned directly the policies adopted, except in rare occasions to call for more efforts in multilateral arms control, encourage non-proliferation efforts<sup>14</sup> or welcome declarations such as President Obama's Prague Speech in 2009.<sup>15</sup> In France, such a stance was recently visible during the hearing of the chief Jewish chaplain at the National Assembly, who both accepted the legitimacy of nuclear weapons in a non-use logic, but also evoked the notion of responsibility, to the national level when the decision to use the weapons is made and to the individual level for scientific and military personal who "commit part of their humanity and responsibility so that we may be in security."<sup>16</sup>

The tragic history of the Jewish communities leads them to entertain ambiguous relationship with weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons in particular. If Moshe Dayan apparently did not hesitate to suggest the use of nuclear weapons during the Kippur War, the jurist and Holocaust survivor Samuel Pisar wrote in his Memoirs, "standing in the shadow of the crematoria, I wish to give witness to humanity that it is possible to turn the whole world into a crematorium by the use of nuclear weapons."<sup>17</sup>

## Nuclear weapons morality and Islam

The compatibility between Islam and nuclear deterrence fed many commentaries and analyses in the recent years. The question was indeed clearly posed when Iran proclaimed from 2004 on that it did not have the intention of developing nuclear weapons as they were contrary to Islam. At the same time, jihadist extremist movements pretending to talk in the name of Islam like Al-Qaeda assessed the existence of a religious duty to obtain weapons of mass destruction to defend the Muslim faith.

The issue of nuclear weapons and Islam is fraught with paradoxes. More than in many other parts of the world, the weight and the influence of religion in some Muslim countries remain important, which makes the question less theoretical or marginal than in other places, especially when religious law (sharia) define the judicial system. At the same time, there is no such thing as an official Islamic voice and sacred texts have been interpreted in very different ways. Finally, where they exist, religious authorities have not always benefited from political independence enabling them to adopt a purely theological thinking, and they still often continue to be very close to their respective governments, which can inflect their positions on this very sensitive topic. These limitations notwithstanding, it is very interesting to study the foundations of the Muslim

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<sup>13</sup> Reuven Kimelman, "Judaism, war and weapons of mass destruction," in ed. Sohail H. Hashmi and Steven P. Lee.

<sup>14</sup> Rabbi Arthur Waskow, "Hiroshima + 60, Jerusalem + 2,500," *Beliefnet*, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Rabbi David Saperstein, "Landmark Speech Sets Course toward Nuclear Weapons-Free World," *Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism*, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Grand rabbin Haïm Korsia, Audition à l'Assemblée nationale sur le thème de la dissuasion nucléaire, Commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées, 12 February 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel Pisar, *Of Blood and Hope*, London: Macmillan, 1982.

ethics and to analyze the interpretations that were made to condemn or legitimize nuclear deterrence.

The Islamic fundamental law, the Koran, contains three sections that can offer theological guidance on this issue. The first one legitimizes the idea of deterrence and is consistent with the verses authorizing revenge: “And prepare against them what force you can and horses tied at the frontier, to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them, whom you do not know (but) Allah knows them” (8:60). The two others put limitations to what Muslim warriors can do: “And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you, and do not exceed the limits, surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits”(2:190) and “And if you take your turn, then retaliate with the like of that with which you were afflicted” (16:126). Finally, to these Koranic extracts, the testimony of Abu Bakr should be added, a follower of Mohammed and first Caliph after his death, who addressed his troops in 632 during the Syrian campaign in such a way: “Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire... Slay not any of the enemy’s flock, save for food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services, leave them alone.”<sup>18</sup> In Shiite Islam, similar rules apply in particular against poisoning, aggression against civilians, destruction of the environment, water holes or animals evoked by the Imams Ali and al-Sadeq.<sup>19</sup>

This doctrinal basis gives therefore an incentive to prepare for and deter an attack, but also to respect the principle of proportionality and not destroy innocent lives. Specialists of Islam who expressed their views on this matter used these sources to deduct injunctions adapted to contemporary circumstances, since sacred texts obviously do not refer to modern weapons, using the deductive analogy process called “qiyas.”<sup>20</sup> From these common references and similar case law, three main and antagonist interpretations have been defended by Muslim thinkers. First, some have estimated that nuclear deterrence can be legitimate but its use must be submitted to rules to avoid useless destructions and respect the principle of proportionality. For others, nuclear deterrence can never be justified, particularly because it fails to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants. Finally, jihadist Islamists have claimed that disposing of weapons of mass destruction was required by Islam in order to free its land.<sup>21</sup>

These diverging interpretations result from the relative importance bestowed to several requirements of the Koran and the Hadiths: principle of proportionality and restraint, valorization of patience, necessity to protect oneself and to deter, acceptability of collateral damages and military necessity. The most ambiguous injunction seems to be “not to transgress” or “not to exceed the limits” (according to different translations), which is often analyzed as commanding not to be the author of an aggression, not to fight non-combatants or not to use disproportional means. One of the most frequent understanding of these opposite rules states that possessing nuclear weapons as a

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<sup>18</sup> Faiqa Mahmood, “Islam and the Bomb,” *Arms Control Wonk*, 25 November 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Davood Feirahi, “Norms of war in Shia Islam,” in eds. Vesselin Popovski, Gregory Reichberg et Nicholas Turner, *World Religions and Norms of War*, United Nations University Press, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Mona Shagri, “Is Islam Compatible with Nuclear Weapons?,” *WagingPeaceToday*, 26 June 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Sohail H. Hashmi, “Islamic Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction: An Argument for Nonproliferation,” in eds. Sohail H. Hashmi and Steven Lee.

deterrent might be acceptable, but that its first use would be excluded. Sending a retaliatory strike is less consensual, especially if it involves targeting women, children or elderly.<sup>22</sup>

In Sunni Islam, a number of theologians have spoken against nuclear weapons. These stands were often an answer to the fatwa pronounced by the Saudi predicator Nasir Sheikh al Fahd in 2003 and repeated in the “Exoneration” pamphlet of Ayman al Zawahiri, according to which the use of nuclear weapons in the jihad led by al-Qaeda is legitimate. This thesis is illustrated by three episodes of the life of the Prophet: a night attack that caused collateral victims, the felling of fruit trees and the use of a catapult during a siege. This theoretical publication led to the fear of imminent attack involving WMDs, fear still present to this day.<sup>23</sup> This explains why several writers have tried to challenge this interpretation in the following year. Jamal Badawi and Muzammil Siddiqi presented six reasons to oppose the production, deployment and use of nuclear weapons: the threat they pose for peace in the world, their brutality and cruelty, their contradiction with the idea of human solidarity defended by Islam, their incompatibility with legitimate means of defense and the material waste resulting from their building and designing.<sup>24</sup>

Other voices have recently defended more nuanced approaches, such as the Egyptian Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa in 2010 and the Pakistani Tahirul Qadri against nuclear terrorism. Theologians teaching at the renowned university of Al-Azhar in Cairo have publicly taken a stand in favor of nuclear deterrence, implying that Muslim countries had a religious obligation to build the capacities to defend themselves and deter aggression, including nuclear attacks, but condemning their use in first strikes. For some Al-Azhar teachers, there is a moral imperative to obtain nuclear weapons, view that was officially adopted in a fatwa by the Ulema committee of the University. The Al-Azhar sheik emphasized the injunction made by Abu-Bakr to fight with the enemy’s weapon, whether it be a spear or a sword, to speculate that if the prophet lived today, he would call for the acquisition of a nuclear capacity.<sup>25</sup> Other academics, such as the dean of the faculty of religious law of the University of Jordan Abd al-Majeed Mahmud Al-Salaheen, adopted similar stands.<sup>26</sup>

The situation is apparently simpler within Shiite Islam, even if many disparities exist. In 2004, Supreme Leader of Iran Ali Khamenei produced a fatwa disqualifying nuclear weapons with regard to Islam, fatwa which is more than religious advice and enjoys a supra-legal status in the theocratic State. Many religious authorities have confirmed this view, especially Grand Ayatollah Hussein-Ali Montazeri, who indicated in a fatwa from October 2009, that “in light of the scope of death and destruction they bring, and in light of the fact that such weapons cannot be used solely against an army of aggression but

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<sup>22</sup> Faiqa Mahmood, “Islam and the Bomb.”

<sup>23</sup> Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, *Islam and the Bomb Religious Justification For and Against Nuclear Weapons*, Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, January 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Jamal Badawi and Muzammil H. Siddiqi, “An Islamic Perspective on the Nuclear Weapons Danger,” *Muslim-Christian Study and Action Guide on the Nuclear Weapons Danger*, Washington DC: Islamic Society of North America and the Churches’ Center for Theology and Public Policy, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Adman Limam, *L’Islam et la Guerre*, Phoenix Éditions, 2009

<sup>26</sup> “Radioactive Fatwas: The Growing Islamist Legitimization of Nuclear Weapons,” *Selfscholar*, 17 September 2013.

will invariably sacrifice the lives of innocent people, even if these innocent lives are those of future generations, nuclear weapons are not permitted according to reason or Sharia.” Ayatollah Yusef Saanei, very influent in Iran, stated that “There is complete consensus on this issue. It is self-evident in Islam that it is prohibited to have nuclear bombs. It is eternal law, because the basic function of these weapons is to kill innocent people. This cannot be reversed.”<sup>27</sup>

Beyond their own interpretation of the Koran, these theologians can rely on the precedent established by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who opposed the use of weapons of mass destruction (chemical weapons in that case), as a retaliation against non-conventional attacks waged against Iranian civilians by Saddam Hussein’s troops during the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>28</sup>

The views among the Shiite community is however not as unequivocal, since several other Iranian Ayatollahs with official functions have published fatwas authorizing the production of weapons of mass destruction, using the arguments of necessity, military technology catch-up, last resort to save lives or even to guarantee victory or stop an aggression, finally, they have also been called necessary to preserve the public interest. These minority clerics also evoked historical precedents of use of non-conventional capacities (especially poisoning and flooding), that were justified by holy texts. Finally, there seems to be evidence that during the Iran-Iraq War, Ayatollah Khomeini authorized the use of chemical weapons to save a besiege battalion in Kurdistan, which would temper his opposition to this kind of weapons and make it dependent on circumstances.<sup>29</sup> That being said, Shiite public opinion is rather convinced by the arguments of Ayatollah Khamenei and remains mostly persuaded that nuclear weapons are not compatible with Islam.

Classical Islamic principles therefore open dilemmas on the question of nuclear deterrence, and can lead to subtle interpretations especially in terms of doctrine of use (first use, retaliation, targeting strategies...). Few concrete example can help solve the question. Pakistan, the only nuclear State with a mostly Muslim population, never puts forward religious arguments to justify neither its choice to develop a nuclear arsenal nor its strategy. The new place bestowed to religion in Pakistan, which coincided with the arrival at the head of the state of General Zia-ul-Haq did not modify this very realist and nationalist stand, despite initial talks of building an “Islamic bomb”. The persisting rumors of a possible extended deterrence role towards other Muslim countries and especially towards Saudi Arabia have never been proven, and do not seem to be supported by the Pakistani military which wished to favor in its alliances and military tactics its own sovereign interests. Likewise, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s references to an “Islamic Bomb” in 1977 seemed to refer to the Islamic civilization rather than religion in itself, and Islamabad did not particularly rush to support its Muslim neighbors in their endeavors to obtain the bomb. In 2006, Pakistani former Ministry of Foreign Affairs Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri is supposed to have said to an American counterpart, according to a telegram published by WikiLeaks, that Pakistan “is the only Muslim

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<sup>27</sup> Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, *Islam and the Bomb Religious Justification For and Against Nuclear Weapons*.

<sup>28</sup> Gareth Porter, “When the Ayatollah Said No to Nukes,” *Foreign Policy*, 16 October 2014.

<sup>29</sup> “Go, Learn about the Atoms, Iranian Religious Discourse on Nuclear Weapons, 1962–Present,” *Selfscholar*, June 2013.

country [with such a weapon] and don't want anyone else to get it.”<sup>30</sup> Religious factors remain therefore secondary for Pakistan, and the only reference made to Islam in the recent years was to recall Koran verse 8:60 on the necessity to prepare for every kind of evil.<sup>31</sup>

In France, the question is very seldom broached by religious leaders, even if Imam Abdelkader Arbi, chief chaplain of the Muslim faith, expressed his views on the subject at the National Assembly hearing in 2014. He stated that it was mostly a personal opinion, and that one should distinguish between the political decision to have the weapon and the decision to use it, mentioning the benefits for France of nuclear deterrence.<sup>32</sup>

## Nuclear weapons morality and Christianity

### *The view of the Catholic Church*

During the two millennia in which it has existed, Christianity has never stopped to think about the morality of violence and war, and how to constrain it to make it acceptable by Christian ethics. Four main schools of thought, with very different approaches, have been developed by Christian thinkers. This diversity shows how difficult it can be to consider together on the one hand various texts from the Old Testament which prone peace but do not condemn systematically the use of violence and even mandate the Hebrew people to fight in certain circumstances, and on the other hand the bulk of Jesus's teaching which promotes extreme non-violence (“But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also”, Gospel of Matthew 5:39).

The first school was built on the model of Jesus Christ and was predominant in Christianity's first centuries. It promotes a total renouncement to violence, including in self-defense, which often led its practitioners to martyrdom. With the conversion of Emperor Constantine, Christian pacifism lost appeal and became more of a fringe, or even heretic opinion. It only gained a new momentum in Catholic communities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for instance with the Pope's call to non-violent resistance against communism in Eastern Europe.

The just war school of thought developed at a time when Christians rose to power and was initially theorized by theologians such as Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine. It was codified in the Middle Ages and still is dominant in the Catholic Church today. Its main assumption is that humanity should be at peace but sin is part of the world and must be fought by the authorities to preserve peace or restore it. This vision can be consistent with the perpetual peace movement, which argues that the Pope can play a role of international mediator to avoid conflicts and solve disputes in a peaceful manner. However, it is opposite to the idea that regular war is the norm and the natural state of things between sovereign States that are entitled to defend their legitimate interests.

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<sup>30</sup> Pervez Hoodbhoy, “What next: A Sunni bomb?,” *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist*, 8 August 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Shirin Shafaie, “Bringing Faith Back in Muslim and Christian Approaches to Nuclear (Non-) Proliferation and Disarmament,” in ed. Paul Hedges, *Contemporary Muslim-Christian Encounters: Developments, Diversity and Dialogues*, Bloomsbury, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Imam Abdelkader Arbi, Commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées, 12 February 2014.

This last branch believes that war must only be limited by the law of armed conflicts (*jus in bello*) and was influential in the Modern Period when the Pope tried to remain neutral in conflicts opposing different European Catholic States.<sup>33</sup>

Just war theories, still studied and observed to this date, focus on the legitimacy of a conflict in itself (*jus ad bellum*), which must meet several criteria (legitimate authority, just cause, proportionality, last resort, reasonable chance of success) as well as the way it is fought (*jus in bello*). Catholic Church authorities have mostly used this traditional syllabus to try to solve the dilemma created by the appearance of nuclear weapons in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the development of oversized nuclear arsenals rapidly convinced them that it was impossible to use the long-established and regular criteria of the laws of war to think about nuclear weapons, because of the high risk of global annihilation that could be provoked by any conflict between nuclear powers.<sup>34</sup>

The morality of a nuclear war was therefore ruled out at the very beginning of the atomic era, but deterrence provoked more discussion, since the question was to know if it could be moral to use immoral weapons with the goal of preserving a country's sovereignty and liberty. It was made even more complex by the fact that although these weapons could lead to the extinction of the divine creation, as long as they were not used, they could maintain a global balance of power, avoid conventional wars and save many lives.

During the early days of the Cold War, the Vatican answered this dilemma by reluctantly endorsing the provisional resort to nuclear deterrence, calling at the same time for multilateral efforts to reduce nuclear arsenals and solve peacefully the East/West conflict. In 1965, the Second Vatican Council asked for the international community "to make a true beginning of disarmament, not unilaterally indeed, but proceeding at an equal pace according to agreement, and backed up by true and workable safeguards".<sup>35</sup> In 1982, this phrase was used again by Pope John Paul II who judged that "in current conditions "deterrence" based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself but as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable."<sup>36</sup>

But the most advanced thinking on this issue happened in the United States, with the opening of a long consultative process of three years which resulted in the publication of a pastoral letter in 1983, now considered a reference document. Three bishop conferences were necessary for the adoption of the definitive text, which integrated remarks made during the circulation of draft versions. The document eventually adopted, much longer than the initial letter, attempted to conciliate the positions of the promoters of the just war theories and of the pacifists, which explains the criticism received by the most extremes on both sides. Going further than the official view

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<sup>33</sup> Gregory Reichberg, "Norms of war in Roman Catholic Christianity," in eds. Vesselin Popovski, Gregory Reichberg and Nicholas Turner.

<sup>34</sup> Jean XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, Lettre Encyclique du Souverain Pontife Jean XXIII, 11 April 1963.

<sup>35</sup> Concile Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, (*Gaudium et Spes*), §81

<sup>36</sup> Jean-Paul II, Message Of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the General Assembly Of The United Nations, 7 June 1982 <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1982/june/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19820607\\_disarmo-onu.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1982/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19820607_disarmo-onu.html)>

expressed by the Pope at the time, this letter only received a moderate support from the Vatican during a consultative meeting.<sup>37</sup>

The pastoral letter does not give an absolute answer to the question of the morality of deterrence, but gives keys by putting the question back in a broader context of peacekeeping, non-violent action and the ideological struggle against the Soviet Union. Several conclusions can be drawn out of the text. First, a first strike can never be justified, and the bishops therefore ask a revision of NATO's nuclear posture. Second, targeting demographic centers is strictly condemned. The bishops have reservations on the feasibility of operating limited nuclear strikes on military targets, which would not lead to a dramatic escalation towards nuclear apocalypse. As such, they evoke their "skepticism" towards such an eventuality but do not rule it out definitively. In this very limited context, they remind their fellow Catholics that deterrence can only be used in a provisional fashion as it is a step towards disarmament and that its only objective is to avoid a nuclear conflagration. Any other use (warfighting strategy, strategic superiority, blurring the lines between nuclear and conventional capacities, deployment of capacities aiming at hard targets ...) would be forbidden. Finally, the letter called for more efforts in terms of arms control and nuclear weapons securing.<sup>38</sup>

The most pacifist Catholic communities judged this document unacceptable since it does not condemn the principle of nuclear deterrence, but it actually makes it rather theoretical since it becomes difficult to imagine a situation in which it would be moral to make use of nuclear weapons while following the bishops' very restrictive criteria. The letter was also criticized for being too favorable to the USSR. It opened a global debate among Catholic communities in different countries, and from 1983, a dozen of bishop conferences had published their perspectives on nuclear deterrence. Some national variations were obvious, for instance among German bishops who appeared less pacifist than their American colleagues, more focused on the final objective of deterrence (preserving peace) and more concerned by the particular strategic context making it, at this time of History, the lesser of two evils. On the other side, in the Netherlands, the Catholic Church took part in the creation of the IKV (Interchurch Peace Council) which organized militant action against the stationing of NATO nuclear weapons in Europe.<sup>39</sup> The momentum gained by the Pax Christi movement at the end of the 1980s in Europe is also the sign of growing divisions among Catholics, and the frailty of their support to the guiding principles of deterrence at the end of the Cold War, which was seen by this peace organization created in France in 1945 as nefarious since it encouraged a permanent relation of hostility between nations.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Donald Davidson, *Nuclear Weapons and the American Churches, Ethical Positions on Modern Warfare*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1983.

<sup>38</sup> *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, A Pastoral Letter on War and Peace by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 3 May 1983, <<http://www.usccb.org/upload/challenge-peace-gods-promise-our-response-1983.pdf>>.

<sup>39</sup> Todd Whitmore (ed.), *Ethics in the Nuclear Age, Strategy, Religious Studies and the Churches*, Southern Methodist University Press, 1989.

<sup>40</sup> Donald Davidson, *Nuclear Weapons and the American Churches, Ethical Positions on Modern Warfare*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1983.

The end of the Cold War initiated a shift in the Church's position towards deterrence.<sup>41</sup> As early as 1992, the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations stated that "the dangerous strategy of nuclear deterrence is outdated" and in 1993 he declared that "arms control is not enough (...) security must lie in the abolition of nuclear weapons and the strengthening of international law. The idea that a nuclear deterrence strategy is necessary to the security of a nation is the most dangerous assumption that was transmitted from the Cold War era to this new one". From 1998, the American Bishop Council judge that the legitimacy of deterrence had disappeared and echoed John Paul II's letter which qualified it as "incompatible with peace." The affirmation was repeated in 2005, when the Permanent Observer of the Holy See in New York declared that "Nuclear deterrence, as an ongoing reality after the Cold War, becomes more and more untenable even if it were in the name of collective security." In 2006, the Vatican evoked for one of the first times the perspective of universal disarmament.<sup>42</sup> This shift was amplified by the nomination of Pope Francis, who apparently feels strongly about this issue, and emphasizes his conviction that deterrence is a hindrance to nuclear disarmament and hurts global security as a whole by maintaining the risk of proliferation. Under his Papacy, the Vatican has regularly regularly in favor of nuclear disarmament and especially during the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of nuclear weapons in 2014<sup>43</sup> and the NPT Review Conference of 2015.<sup>44</sup>

This turn is the sign of a change of perspective. Nuclear deterrence is now considered as leading inevitably, in the eye of the Church, in useless, irreversible, indiscriminate and disproportionate suffering, which is no longer justified by the international context.<sup>45</sup> The "interim ethic", adopted during the Cold War, which meant that deterrence could be accepted if it filled three conditions (doctrine deterring only nuclear attacks, sufficiency and no search for nuclear superiority, and step towards disarmament), were progressively abandoned. The Church indicates indeed that these conditions are no longer met, in the context of the "Second Nuclear Age" marked by instability, a greater integration of nuclear weapons in the doctrines of major powers, an enhanced risk of use and new threats against which deterrence is powerless.<sup>46</sup>

This general move shows that the Vatican does not hesitate to get into higher levels of details to judge that the geostrategic conditions under which nuclear deterrence could be moral no longer exist. Second, the criteria "step towards disarmament" is often put

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<sup>41</sup> Hannah Haegeland, "The Catholic Church and The Bomb", *The Arms Control Wonk*, 30 October 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Fanny Magdelaine, « L'Eglise et l'arme nucléaire en 15 dates, » *La Vie*, 5 August 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Message from His Holiness Pope Francis to the Vienna International Conference on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons, 7 December 2014, <[https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Zentrale/Aussenpolitik/Abruestung/HINW14/HINW14\\_Messa ge\\_from\\_His\\_Holiness\\_Pope\\_Francis.pdf](https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Aussenpolitik/Abruestung/HINW14/HINW14_Messa ge_from_His_Holiness_Pope_Francis.pdf)>.

<sup>44</sup> Declaration of Archbishop Bernadito C. Auza, NPT Review Conference, 29 April 2015, <[http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/revcon2015/statements/29April\\_HolySee.pdf](http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/revcon2015/statements/29April_HolySee.pdf)>.

<sup>45</sup> Pape François, "Nuclear Disarmament: Time for Abolition," December 2014

"The strategic nuclear situation has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War. Rather than providing security...reliance on a strategy of nuclear deterrence has created a less secure world."

<<http://www.paxchristi.net/sites/default/files/nuclearweaponstimeforabolitionfinal.pdf>>.

<sup>46</sup> Gerard Powers, "From Nuclear Deterrence to Disarmament: Evolving Catholic Perspectives," *Arms Control Today*, May 2015.



forward, which does not mean that the Holy See is calling for immediate and unilateral disarmament, but that it feels that delegitimizing nuclear weapons is necessary to build a world order based on peace and security, which is the prerequisite for nuclear disarmament. As they emphasize notions such as human security and collective security, Church officials state that possessing nuclear weapons is an obstacle to this vision of peace because of their close relations with rigid concepts of national security based on political, economic and military domination.

The Church's new approach may have a real impact thanks to its moral influence and capacity to popularize a debate often restricted to experts, but also because of its weight among other religions. The time passed by US Under-Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller at the Vatican this past few years is an evidence of the interest with which nuclear-weapons states are following this evolution.<sup>47</sup>

### ***The view of the Protestant denominations***

Protestant Churches have many commonalities with the Catholic Church on the issue of war and the morality of nuclear weapons, since they share the same fundamental sacred books as well as a great number of thinkers such as Saint Augustin or Saint Thomas Aquinas. They however present a main difference: they do not have a unique authority and are therefore characterized by a plurality of approaches and nuances which coexist both in times and places. Furthermore, their teachings reflect also in a great part the visions of their founding fathers: for Luther, the idea that war is part of this earthly world marred by sin and needs to be fought to restore peace, and for Calvin, the obligation to submit to authorities chosen by God and to use if necessary force to maintain order.

A majority of Protestant Churches (Lutheran, Calvinist and Anglican) have been since the Reformation in close interaction with the political power and have therefore belonged to dominant social forces trying to legitimate the use of force by defending the Christian theory of just war and the lack of formal interdiction of soldiering in the New Testament. Little by little, the emergence of Churches opposing the established power or seen as non-conventional led to the re-emergence of more pacifist approaches. This was especially true in Anabaptist, Quaker and Brethren communities that denounced the just war theories as hypocritical, relative and very difficult to maintain in view of the technological improvement of weapons. They also contested the separation between a worldly kingdom and a heavenly kingdom and called for the creation of the peace of Christ on earth as fast as possible.

Paradoxically, the development of weapons of mass destruction was instrumental in pushing some Churches to change their stance, as they noticed that any war among major powers carried the risk of nuclear escalation and emphasized the need to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner.<sup>48</sup> In fact, the coming of the first nuclear age was an opportunity for many Churches to reconsider the basis of their war ethic and to adapt it

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<sup>47</sup> Elisabeth Dias, "Pope Francis' Latest Mission: Stopping Nuclear Weapons," *Time*, 10 April 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Valerie Ona Morkevicius, "Norms of War in Protestant Christianity," in eds. Vesselin Popovski, Gregory Reichberg and Nicholas Turner.

to the question of nuclear weapons. The answers they brought have varied, and have, in some ways, reflected the evolutions of the geostrategic context.

At the beginning of the 1950s, individuals rather than institutions were the first to work on this subject, and the debate was marked by Protestant philosophes who tried to update the concept of just war. Paul Tillich (Lutheran), in particular, assessed that a nuclear deterrent could be legitimate if it neither relied on the first use of nuclear weapons nor on the annihilation of the adversary. Reinhold Niebuhr (Reformed Church) insisted on the necessity to deter by the most efficient way an opponent with fundamentally evil values (the USSR). Paul Ramsey (Methodist) came back to the *a priori* moral consequences of an act and judged that massive bombing strategies on civilian population could never be considered just no matter what the result, contrary to some counterforce strikes that could be acceptable.

As with the Catholic Church, it is really from the 1980s on that a discussion started openly among religious institutions, in the context of the Euromissiles deployment. In West Germany, Lutheran officials had been quite reserved during the beginning of the Cold War and felt that their priority was to avoid an East-West conflict and to favor reunification, with a tendency to adopt relativism. In 1981, the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD), a federation of 20 autonomous Churches, published a memorandum on the deployment of the Euromissiles (Pershing II and GLCM) within NATO and called for a political solution, and not a military answer, while advising against any nuclear-focused initiative detrimental to peace. The Reformed Church went further and called for the global elimination of nuclear weapons. Logically, the Federation of Evangelical Churches of East Germany (BEK) was close to the official position of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of Germany.<sup>49</sup>

In the United States, the main denominations' stands were at the time influenced by the positions taken by the major Church federations and in particular the NCC. The National Council of Churches of Christ (NCC), which brings together most American Protestant mainstream Churches, adopted a more critical position after the election of Ronald Reagan and accused the administration of sustaining the arms race. It called for renewed efforts in favor of arms control, the signature of a comprehensive test ban treaty as early as 1970 and more restraint in the use of force, a position that drew criticism as it was denounced as "extreme-pacifist" and "leftist".

The United Methodist Church, the United Presbyterian Church and the American Episcopal Church were more nuanced and worried in the 1980s about the potential consequences of a nuclear conflict. They insisted respectively on the necessity of bilateral disarmament, a global approach to peacekeeping or the adoption of the no-first use posture. The American Baptist Church (ABC) and the United Church of Christ were at the time more influenced by pacifist movements and criticized the Reagan administration for refueling the arms race. On the other end of the spectrum, Lutheran Churches and Reformed Churches did not seem convinced that the nuclear factor changed their approach to the just war doctrine, and traditionally conservative denominations such as the Southern Baptist Convention and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints only called for progressive and realistic disarmament measures. On a more marginal note, historic Pacifist Churches (Anabaptist, Quaker, Mennonite,

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<sup>49</sup> Todd Whitmore (ed.), *Ethics in the Nuclear Age, Strategy, Religious Studies and the Churches*.

Amish, Brethren), which only represent a few thousands of believers but have a greater influence, asked at this time for a convention banning nuclear weapons, an immediate freeze in arsenals and unilateral disarmament measures, no-first use pledges and even in some cases civil disobedience (conscientious objection and fiscal disobedience).<sup>50</sup>

Differences of position between denominations tended to crystallize after this period of deep reflection. Several of the major traditional Churches aligned themselves slowly with a posture condemning deterrence as absolutely incompatible with their ethics. This is especially the case of the United Methodist Church, which asked, as early as 1986, for the elimination of all nuclear weapons and denounced clearly nuclear deterrence,<sup>51</sup> a position that was made official in 1988. In 1992, a conference of Methodist bishops made concrete propositions to promote the “Zero option”, and adopted a firm stance which assimilated deterrence to taking hostage civilian populations. It asked publicly for unconditional and immediate renouncement of the use and possession of nuclear weapons, a call that was made again in 1996, 2000 and 2004.<sup>52</sup> For the Baptists of the ABC, the elimination of nuclear weapons, seen as immoral as they could make the Earth inhabitable for current and future generations, has regularly been expressed as a priority objective, but the Church has given limited details on how it could be met and especially on whether it recommended immediate, gradual, unilateral or multilateral disarmament.<sup>53</sup> This shift of position, which was limited but clear in some denominations, was strongly influenced by the Catholic Church’s position, which spurred some of its fellow Christian Churches into a more combative posture, as was recognized in an open letter signed by several religious authorities in 2016 that congratulated Pope Francis for his exemplary action.<sup>54</sup>

Many Churches have however not made this issue a priority and remained vague in their condemnation of nuclear weapons, calling generally for arms control gradual initiatives. Concerning the NCC, the question of the morality of nuclear deterrence was almost never mentioned between the end of the Cold War and 2009, when the Council

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<sup>50</sup> Donald Davidson, *Nuclear Weapons and the American Churches, Ethical Positions on Modern Warfare*.

<sup>51</sup> In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace, the United Methodist Council of Bishops, Nashville: Graded Press, 1986.

*“We say a clear and unconditional No to nuclear war and to any use of nuclear weapons. We conclude that nuclear deterrence is a position that cannot receive the church's blessing.”*

<sup>52</sup> Saying No to Nuclear Deterrence, From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church – 2008

*“As an instrument of mass destruction, nuclear weapons slaughter the innocent and ravage the environment. When used as instruments of deterrence, nuclear weapons hold innocent people hostage for political and military purposes. Therefore, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence is morally corrupt and spiritually bankrupt.”*

<<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/-saying-no-to-nuclear-deterrence-deleted-or-expired-2012>>.

<sup>53</sup> American Baptist Policy Statement on Peace modified in September 2007

*« We are common inheritors of the earth and we hold in trust the genetic material of future generations and the earth on which those generations will live. We declare that the use or development of weapons which would damage genes or render the earth or portions of it uninhabitable is a sin against present and future generations and must be opposed. We call on all nations to abolish their nuclear weapons and to dispose of such weapons in a manner that is not harmful to either the physical or political environment.”*

<<http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/peace.pdf>>.

<sup>54</sup> Nicolas Cornell, “Religious Leaders Urge Obama to Make Good on His Prague Commitment,” *Peace Action’s Groundwell*, 18 May 2016.

reminded the goal of global nuclear disarmament without providing further precisions.<sup>55</sup> In this regard, it often takes part in American political debates to support arms control measures, especially in Congress. The Presbyterian Church (USA) also took a discreet but systematic stand in the 1990-2000 debate and asked from 1994 for the recognition that using nuclear weapons would be a crime against humanity. In 2003, it asked the American government to renounce its first-use doctrine and to adopt gradual disarmament measures in cooperation with Russia.<sup>56</sup> A similar pattern can be observed with the Episcopal Church. In its 1994 convention, it called the United States to undertake diplomatic efforts to lead to the abolition of nuclear weapons. In the 2000s, it criticized the administration for the investments made in new weapon programs.<sup>57</sup> As for the National Association of Evangelists, faithful to President Reagan's vision of arms control progresses enabled by a strong and free America, it has agreed to rethink deterrence in the contemporary context.<sup>58</sup> Finally, the Southern Baptist Convention remains quite guarded on this issue. It published resolutions in favor of multilateral arms control in 1978, 1979, 1982 and 1983, but then did not evoke the subject again until 2003 when it called the administration to do its best to prevent terrorist organizations from gaining access to weapons of mass destruction.<sup>59</sup>

In the United States, Protestant Churches remain therefore, except for the Pacifist Churches and the UMC, rather cautious and pragmatist on the issue of nuclear weapon elimination, many seeing it as necessary but in a gradual way, and calling for concrete measures (ratification of New Start, the CTBT, withdrawal of NATO nuclear weapons from Europe)<sup>60</sup>, which led them to try to influence debates in Congress.

In Europe, the main Churches have been deeply influenced by the end of the Cold War, especially in Germany where the Lutheran Church evolved from supporting a step-by-step disarmament process (rejecting especially any unilateral initiative) to calling more directly for global disarmament, including multilateral and unilateral measures, traditional diplomacy and militant peace action.<sup>61</sup>

In the United Kingdom, the renewal of the nuclear submarine system SSBN Trident, which has been definitively adopted in July 2016 but led to a debate as early as the 2000s, gave the main Churches an opportunity to reconsider their position on the

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<sup>55</sup> NCC, Nuclear Disarmament: The Time is Now, A Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA and Church World Service, 12 November 2009.

<sup>56</sup> Statements on Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Its Predecessors A Brief Summary Presbyterian Peacemaking Program

<<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/ganuclearweapons.pdf>>.

<sup>57</sup> The Episcopal Church, Background: Nuclear Weapons, June 2, 2005, Office of Government Relations

<<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/article/background-nuclear-weapons>>.

<sup>58</sup> Mehdi Ghasemi, "Evangelicals rethink nuclear weapons," *OnFaith*, 29 November 2011.

<sup>59</sup> Bob Allen, "Young evangelicals call for end to nuclear weapons," *World & Way*, 2009.

<sup>60</sup> World Council of Church, Follow-up on the adoption of NATO's Strategic Concept, Letter to Mr Barack Obama, President of the USA, Mr Dmitry Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, and Mr Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO Secretary General Geneva, 11 March 2016.

<<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/joint-declarations/follow-up-on-the-adoption-ofnatos-strategic-concept>>.

<sup>61</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "No more nuclear weapons - that's the goal," *EKD*, 4 August 2015.

legitimacy of nuclear deterrence. The Church of Scotland, known for its Presbyterian tradition, spoke in 2001 against the renewal of Trident. In 2006, it joined forces with other Scottish denominations (Methodists and Catholics) to publish a petition to this end.<sup>62</sup> During the campaign against Trident, the Church of Scotland used three main arguments against the British deterrent: its bad example encouraging proliferation, the unlawfulness of nuclear weapons according to humanitarian law and the immorality of weapons judged “fundamentally evil”.<sup>63</sup>

In 1983, a synod of the Church of England had concluded that it was legitimate for the United Kingdom to rely on nuclear deterrence, but advised reducing the size of its arsenal.<sup>64</sup> Until recently, the Church authorities remained very discreet on the issue, calling occasionally its members to think about the issue but avoiding the formulation of clear-cut opinions. In 2006, personalities however questioned the opportunity to renew the Trident, such as the Archbishop of Canterbury who asked for an open debate or the Archbishop of Wales who stated that the funds used for the program could be dedicated to more useful ends.<sup>65</sup> In 2007, at the end of a synod, the Church asked the Secretary of State for Defense to think about the compatibility of Trident with the international commitments taken by the United Kingdom as well as its ethics.<sup>66</sup> In 2015, the Church was more direct in a pastoral letter published ahead of the General Election, in which it claimed that “traditional arguments for nuclear deterrence need re-examining.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Peace in the Twenty-first Century No. 25 Summer 2007 Trident - A Theological Approach, A reflection by Rev. Dr. Kenneth Greet, President of the Methodist Peace Fellowship

“We urge the government of the United Kingdom not to invest in a replacement for the Trident system and to begin now the process of decommissioning these weapons with the intention of diverting the sums spent on nuclear weaponry to programmes of aid and development.”

<sup>63</sup> The Church of Scotland, Nuclear Weapons, Discussion Points

“The Church of Scotland, along with other Churches in Scotland, has stated its belief that nuclear weapons are so destructive and so harmful to civilians and the natural world that they are inherently evil; to possess, threaten or use such terrible weapons of mass destruction is a dreadful concept which fundamentally threatens the future of humanity as a species.”

<[http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/8895/Nuclear\\_Weapons\\_leaflet.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/8895/Nuclear_Weapons_leaflet.pdf)>

<sup>64</sup> Church of England Ethical Investment Advisory Group Defence investments policy May 2010

“...it is the duty of Her Majesty’s Government and her allies to maintain adequate forces to guard against nuclear blackmail and to deter nuclear and non-nuclear aggressors.”

<sup>65</sup> Matthew Tempest, “Trident is legally and morally questionable, says church,” *The Guardian*, 5 December 2010.

<sup>66</sup> Letter of Mr William Farrell, 5 March 2007

<<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/45524/trident.pdf>>

<sup>67</sup> Who is my neighbour? A Letter from the House of Bishops to the People and Parishes of the Church of England for the General Election 2015

*“The sheer scale of indiscriminate destructive power represented by nuclear weapons such as Trident was only justifiable, if at all, by appeal to the principle of mutually assured destruction. For many, including many Christians, that in itself was a deeply problematic argument, although there were also many who were prepared to live with the strategy because it appeared to secure peace and save lives. Shifts in the global strategic realities mean that the traditional arguments for nuclear deterrence need re-examining. The presence of such destructive capacity pulls against any international sense of shared community. But such is the talismanic power of nuclear weaponry that few politicians seem willing to trust the electorate with a real debate about the military capacity we need in the world of today.”*

<<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2170230/whoismyneighbour-pages.pdf>>.

### ***The view of the Russian Orthodox Church***

The Russian Orthodox Church stands out nowadays since it is the only Christian Church to be openly defending nuclear deterrence. This position can be explained by the strong closeness between the Church, and especially the Moscow Patriarchate at its head, and the Russian political power. As the Church is a national Church, which is one of the characteristics of orthodoxy, there is a historical symbiosis between political and religious interests. As such, the security of the national community is often blended with the security of the believers. The recent history of the Church emphasized this leaning. Indeed, after a first period characterized by the Bolsheviks' mass persecutions against religious authorities, Stalin agreed to a frail compromise with the Orthodox Church in the specific context of the "great patriotic war", which enabled its survival provided it was extremely docile to the Kremlin's wishes.

It was therefore uneasy for Orthodox leaders to question Moscow's nuclear policy, and this only changed marginally after the fall of the Soviet Union since the Patriarchate is still accused of supporting too faithfully President Putin's foreign policy.<sup>68</sup>

However, it would be oversimplifying to say that the Church's position is only based on political considerations, since it also derives from consistent theological interpretations. Orthodox Russians consider that two teachings of the Bible are especially important to understand the world. First, sin has been inherent to mankind since the Fall and men can fight against it but not decide by themselves its definitive abolition. As human beings carry evil in them, they cannot suppress the threat of war by decree but only by working on their individual behavior and removing sin from their soul. This laborious and spiritual endeavor cannot bear fruit immediately, which means that in the near and medium term, war is a necessary evil deriving from the avidity and desire of conquest of some individuals. In this framework, Christians have a duty to defend themselves and to defend their community, and to accept the reality of the world as it is. Secondly, the Russian Orthodox Church insists – as does Christianity in general – on the fact that the divine providence can confront humankind with catastrophes for an ultimate good goal, which is often the way nuclear weapons are perceived by Church's authorities.<sup>69</sup>

Concretely, the Church states that as long as war exists, one needs to be able to defend oneself. In this context, nuclear weapons are not especially illegitimate, all the more since Russian theologians are convinced that they were instrumental in preventing a third world war to break out during the Cold War.<sup>70</sup> Besides, with the development of more precise weapons and the possibility not to target civilians, they believe that there is only a difference of degree and not of nature between nuclear and conventional weapons, in an ethical point of view. This point is debated within the Church, and some have argued that weapons of mass destruction could annihilate God's Creation, which would be a deadly sin. But for most Russian theologians, this vision is exaggerated since nuclear weapons can be used in a targeted manner and since the threat of mass

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<sup>68</sup> Michael Bourdeaux, "Church that hails President Putin as a "miracle of God"," *The Times*, 9 May 2015.

<sup>69</sup> François Thual and Boris Zinovieff, "Se défendre contre le mal. L'orthodoxie contre les nouvelles formes de guerre," in *Les religions et la Guerre*, ed. Pierre Viaud, Paris : Les Éditions du Cerf, 1991.

<sup>70</sup> Archpriest Andrei Efanov, « Зачем Церковь освящает оружие? », *Abzuka.ru*, 9 February 2014.

destruction is at the roots of deterrence which maintained peace for the last 70 years. For these thinkers, refusing nuclear war would be tantamount to refusing war itself, and the Russian Orthodox Church opposes absolute pacifism.<sup>71</sup>

For the Church therefore, and especially for Moscow's Patriarch Kirill, who spoke several times clearly on this issue,<sup>72</sup> Christians must act to make a world without nuclear weapons possible, and he has consistently called for disarmament and restraint. But it must be progressive and happen when the right conditions are met. Unilateral and sudden disarmament would be a disaster as it would jeopardize Russia's sovereignty and potentially lead to the outbreak of deadly new conflicts.<sup>73</sup> Other clergymen went further and stated that immediate nuclear disarmament was a utopia and reminded that it was not nuclear weapons that were the cause of conflicts, but a universal thirst for power, fueled by evil, and due to the fallen condition of mankind.<sup>74</sup>

This stance is reflected on a daily bases by symbolic actions such as the benediction by Patriarch Kirill of a promotion of graduates from the Peter the Great Military Academy of the Strategic Missile Troops in 2012. On this occasion, the Russian Orthodox Church's leader emphasized that "Not only the security and sovereignty of our country but also peace in the whole world depend on the competency of those who perform this military service" and that Russian nuclear arsenal, "while securely protecting the Fatherland and the nations historically close to us in spirit, at the same time serves the cause of peace, maintaining most important balances, which deny others the right and the opportunity to go unpunished when using lethal nuclear weapons."<sup>75</sup>

In 2007, a mass was held in Sarov in homage to the forces in charge of maintaining the Russian nuclear arsenal that are placed under the protection of Saint Seraphim of Sarov. As this benediction provoked astonishment and reactions, the Church reminded its followers that it saw nuclear weapons as a "necessary evil" which has enabled Russia since 1990 to preserve its independence.<sup>76</sup> For Augustin Sokolowski, an Orthodox theologian, this initiative is an evidence of several beliefs shared by the Church: the necessity to bless humans in charge of the nuclear mission and therefore help them overcome trials and mistakes, the necessity to bless sensitive locations to prevent them from falling prey to evil and also the necessity to pray for a successful deterrence policy able to preserve Russia's independence, that is, by metonymy, the Church's.<sup>77</sup>

The Orthodox Church's support for nuclear deterrence is not incidental and gives it legitimacy in Russia, as nuclear weapons' morality is more and more debated internationally. Even if it is often criticized for its never-failing support to the Kremlin's foreign policy, the Patriarchate of Moscow stands out for a specific and traditional

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<sup>71</sup> Débat autour des propos adoptés par la Commission inter-orthodoxe préconciliaire réunie à Chambésy, 1986, quoted in Thual and Zinovieff.

<sup>72</sup> "Russia needs nuclear weapons," Patriarch Kirill, *Sputnik News*, 11 September 2009.

<sup>73</sup> Patriarch Kirill, "Ядерное оружие в святом месте?," *Pravmir.ru*, 13 September 2009

<sup>74</sup> Archpriest Vsevolod Chapline, "Ядерное оружие — неизбежное зло в мире, испорченном грехом," *Russian Orthodox Church*, 8 February 2007.

<sup>75</sup> "Our sovereignty, world peace depend on our nuclear shield - Russian patriarch," *BBC*, 16 April 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Alexander Osipovich, "Church Offers Atomic Blessing," *The Moscow Times*, 5 September 2007.

<sup>77</sup> Augustin Sokolowski, "Об освящении ядерного оружия. Ответы православного и католического богословов," *V Svete Yevangeliya*, 5 May 2008.

doctrinal perspective, imbued with realism, refusal of hubris and resignation to the sinful nature of human's condition.<sup>78</sup>

### ***Nuclear weapons morality and Buddhist traditions***

In the international collective unconscious, few religious traditions have been more associated to pacifism as Buddhism in the last century. Buddhist influence takes multiple forms in Asia: it is almost an official religion in South-East Asia, while it has only a minority status in China and Japan but has irrigated these two societies for centuries and has created syncretism with other philosophic and religious traditions. It is therefore noteworthy to look at the Buddhists' positions in terms of nuclear deterrence on a continent where military nuclear issues seem to be called to play an ever greater role.

As most religious tradition, the study of Buddhism is made more complex by the diversity of views of its promoters, both in time and in space. Nowadays, three major streams can be distinguished with quite different teachings: Mahayana in China and Japan, Theravada in South-East Asia and Sri Lanka, Vajrayana in Tibet, the Himalaya and Mongolia, but many other schools exist with teachings corresponding to their respective reference Temples. In terms of chronology, three periods can be noticed. First, the founding period that coincides with the lifetime of Siddhartha Gautama, the historic Buddha, in the 6<sup>th</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and that is characterized by an almost absolute rejection of violence as well as temporal power. Then, the rule of the Indian King Ashoka serves as an ideal for a Buddhist prince who manages to renounce violence as a tool of governance and keep the support of his subjects through peaceful means. But the diffusion of Buddhism as a majority religion in many States gave it a proximity with political power which led it in most cases to support established power and even military adventures. This was notably the case in the Middle Ages when monks called to arms to defend the national territory against Chinese and Mongol invasions, with the support of Thailand entering World War I in 1917 or with Japan's colonial policy in the 1930s.<sup>79</sup> With the progress of democracy in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is still ongoing today (in particular in Myanmar), monks and lay Buddhists have often for the first time had the opportunity to speak with an independent voice, which gives them a chance to think again on societal issues such as war and peace, and in the matter at hands, the morality of nuclear weapons.

As it is, the Buddha's teaching is clearly oriented towards peace and insists on the value of life of all sensitive beings, justice, harmony and the interdependence between all things. Episodes of the life of the Buddha show him playing a role of mediator and convincing leaders to renounce to armed conflicts.<sup>80</sup> Other stories and extreme interpretations of Buddhism, and especially of the reincarnation principle, have on the contrary been used to justify violence and even crime perceived as delivering the victim

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<sup>78</sup> Nikolai Sokov, "Russian-perspective on nuclear disarmament and the post-nuclear world," in eds. Nik Hynek and Michal Smetana, *Global Nuclear Disarmament, Strategic, political and regional perspectives*, Routledge, 2016.

<sup>79</sup> Suwanna Satha-Anand, "Questions of Violence in Thai Bouddhism," in eds. Vladimir Tikhonov and Torkel Brekke, *Buddhism and Violence: Militarism and Buddhism in Modern Asia*, Roudledge, London, 2013.

<sup>80</sup> Mahinda Deelle, "Norms of War in Theravada Buddhism," in eds. Vesselin Popovski, Gregory Reichberg and Nicholas Turner.



from his suffering,<sup>81</sup> but the majority of dogmas inherited from Buddhism have kept the idea of “ahimsa” (non-violence) as an absolute rule.<sup>82</sup> The importance of causality in Buddhist traditions can explain this choice; since it means that evil leads to evil and that a violent act must be avoided not to open a long cycle of retaliation. Military victory fuels indeed a spirit of revenge among the vanquished which is detrimental to peace in the long term (in the present and future lives). With this in mind, promoting absolute pacifism is not a show of weakness, but demonstrates a deep understanding of the dynamics of violence and their causality links.<sup>83</sup>

This interpretation is dominant in the Theravada tradition. But the idea that a prince can exert legitimate violence to protect its society from aggression (internal and external) also exists, especially in the Mahayana tradition prevalent in China and Japan. This school of thought emphasizes texts which mention a model of enlightened universal king, who founds his kingdom on the principles of non-violence and spontaneous obedience of his subjects, but nonetheless travels escorted with an imposing army which has the task of maintaining order.<sup>84</sup> Other monasteries insist on the leader’s responsibility to protect its people, and to fight injustice if necessary by resorting to violence, a role that can accommodate the idea of deterrence.<sup>85</sup>

These branches argue for an approach which is in a way reminiscent of utilitarianism and assesses that there is a duty to commit an evil deed if this is the only way to prevent the realization of more or worst ones. This perspective gives a more nuanced answer to the question of nuclear weapons. Contrary to some interpretations focusing on the nature of the act and its intrinsic compatibility with the main prohibition of Buddhism, it considers the question through the prism of finality and assesses the consequence of the action. Thus, it weights its capacity to preserve justice and peace for the greater number, even if it means that some sacrifice, physical (destruction of human lives) or moral (negative impact on the *karma*, the destiny of the perpetrator who is going to suffer from it in its future lives).<sup>86</sup> With this in mind, some theologians believe that deterrence is not contrary to the Buddhist ethics, even if the interpretation of the most pacifist canonical texts is taken into account. This assessment is more debatable with regards to nuclear deterrence.<sup>87</sup>

It should be noted that in countries where the nuclear question is most relevant (China and Japan), the conventional school of thought is rather discreet on national and international debates on the morality of nuclear weapons. On the contrary, non-

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<sup>81</sup> Paul Demiéville, “Buddhism and War,” in eds. Michael Jerryson and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Buddhist Warfare*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010.

<sup>82</sup> Bernard Faure, *Bouddhisme et Violence*, Éditions Le Cavalier Bleu, Paris, 2008.

<sup>83</sup> Pahalawattage Don Premasiri, “The Place for a Righteous War in Buddhism,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, vol. 10, 2003.

<sup>84</sup> Xue Yu, “Buddhism and the Justification of War with Focus on Chinese Buddhist History,” in eds. Vladimir Tikhonov and Torkel Brekke, *Buddhism and Violence: Militarism and Buddhism in Modern Asia*, Routledge, New York, 2013.

<sup>85</sup> David W. Chappell, “Buddhist perspectives on weapons of mass destruction,” in eds. Sohail H. Hashmi and Steven P. Lee.

<sup>86</sup> Xue Yu, “Buddhism and the Justification of War with Focus on Chinese Buddhist History.”

<sup>87</sup> Damien Keown, “The Role of Deterrence in Buddhist Peace-building,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 1 January 2014.

conventional and recent Japanese schools inspired by the Buddhist tradition are more often heard on this issue, as well as the Tibetan Buddhism and especially its representative in exile, Dalai-Lama Tenzin Gyatso.

Thanks to a lot of media coverage, the Dalai-Lama's opposition to nuclear weapons is often heard. In 1989, he proposed to make Tibet a nuclear-free zone as one of the features of the creation of an "Ahimsa" zone on the Tibetan plateau.<sup>88</sup> Emphasizing the values of compassion, interdependence and universal love, he noted that notions of national preferences and adversaries were opposite to the values of Buddhism. In 2000, he stated that the abolition of nuclear weapons was a preliminary step necessary to global disarmament leading to peace, but specified that it could only happen step by step and following "internal disarmament", a personal and spiritual work made by individuals to live in peace and harmony.<sup>89</sup> This rather balanced position is also visible in the spiritual leader's frequently-repeated opposition to any discrimination against nations in terms of weaponry. As such, he is said to have argued during a conference held in India that he is "totally against nuclear weapons, however, on this planet [if] some bigger nations have certain rights to keep nuclear weapons, then India [is] also one important nation."<sup>90</sup> This does not prevent the Dalai-Lama from regularly calling nuclear-weapon States to speed up their disarmament efforts, in order to eliminate the "greatest danger for humanity," namely the risk of nuclear destruction.<sup>91</sup> In this regard, he drew hope from the reduction of nuclear arsenals worldwide observed since the end of the Cold War and praised the vision expressed by President Obama in Prague in 2009.<sup>92</sup>

In Japan, it is relatively difficult to analyze the stance taken by the Buddhist community as the various ethical and religious schools are more or less linked to the Buddhist tradition and benefit from a lot of autonomy. Moreover, the traditional strong opposition to anything nuclear since the end of World War Two goes beyond religious belongings. However, it is possible to detect a specific Buddhist anti-nuclear militancy, which is most visible in the activities of recent denominations. As early as 1955, Japanese Buddhist temples joined force with Christian Churches and Shinto shrines to organize the "First Worldwide Conference for the Prohibition of the Atomic and Hydrogen bomb" in Hiroshima. Later on, they remained active to denounce nuclear weapons and war in general (especially during the Vietnam War), and to publicly apologize for pre-1945 Japanese militarism.

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<sup>88</sup> The 14th Dalai Lama - Nobel Lecture. Nobelprize.org. Nobel Media AB 2014, 11 December 1989

<[http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1989/lama-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1989/lama-lecture.html)>.

<sup>89</sup> 14e Dalai Lama, Message for the New Millennium, 1er January 2000

*"In order to make non-violence a reality we must first work on internal disarmament and then proceed to work on external disarmament. By internal disarmament I mean ridding ourselves of all the negative emotions that result in violence. External disarmament will also have to be done gradually, step by step. We must first work on the total abolishment of nuclear weapons and gradually work up to total demilitarization throughout the world."*

<<http://www.dalailama.com/messages/world-peace/millennium-message>>.

<sup>90</sup> "Dalai Lama says certain nations like India can keep nuclear weapons 'for the safety of all,'" *DNA India*, 28 January 2015.

<sup>91</sup> Dalai Lama, A Human Approach to World Peace, 1 February 2001.

<<http://www.dalailama.com/messages/world-peace/a-human-approach-to-peace>>.

<sup>92</sup> The Dalai Lama, "Why I'm hopeful about the world's future," *The Washington Post*, Opinions, 13 June 2016.

But only a fraction really campaigned militantly in various peace and disarmament movements, which do not belong to the traditional Mahayana schools.<sup>93</sup> For the Soka Gakkai movement, pacifism and nuclear disarmament became a hobby horse,<sup>94</sup> and the movement is now at the forefront of the struggle to promote a convention prohibiting nuclear weapons. It has denounced for years the American nuclear umbrella protecting Japan.<sup>95</sup> Nipponzan Myohoji was also very critical of American deterrent during the Cold War, and is still active since it organized in 2015 a demonstration in the United States in preparation of the NPT Conference Review.<sup>96</sup>

The synthesis between communities influenced by the Buddha's call in favor of non-violence but relatively passive on the issue of nuclear weapons and a minority campaigning for disarmament is visible in the call of most monks and spiritual leaders. They advise their followers to work on inner peace, but also to promote education to peace and arms control, poverty relief which is seen as the root of most conflict, and a better understanding of adversaries' motivations, to limit the risk of war that could link to the use of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>97</sup>

### ***Nuclear weapons morality and Hinduism***

The complexity of the issue of the compatibility of nuclear weapons and religious beliefs worldwide is illustrated by the endeavors of the BJP, an openly Hindu party, to give India a nuclear weapon status. Indeed, since the leadership of Gandhi and, to a certain extent, Nehru, India's culture has benefitted from a rather peaceful image, and has been described as promoting non-violence and rejecting weapons of mass destruction. But it would be wrong to systematically assimilate these values to the Hindu tradition. In the case of Gandhi in particular, his moral commitments were mostly a personal approach, which derived from ascetic minority Hindu branches recurrent in the religious history of the sub-continent, but also from non-Hindu inspirations such as Jainism. The two leaders' vision of their country's values is therefore a recent trend which cannot be considered as a fair reflection of a dominant branch of Hinduism.

Contrary to many cults and ascetic religious schools born in India, the most famous one being today Buddhism, the Hindu tradition bestows historically an important place to violence. Since the Ancient times, its founding texts have been mythological stories which were as much theological guidelines as political treatises on the practice of power and dedicated to kings. These stories did not condemn war, which was seen as the prerogative of an upper cast of warriors (Ksatriyas). At the most, the war ethics of this mythology includes a chivalry code and invites Hindu soldiers to fight in an honest way, on a regular ground and an anticipated fashion, without resorting to poisoned, kindled or barbed arrows (Book of Manu). It also requires distinction between combatants and

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<sup>93</sup> Kawase Takaya, "Anti-War and Peace Movements among Japanese Buddhists after the Second World War," in eds. Vladimir Tikhonov and Torkel Brekke.

<sup>94</sup> Robert Kisala, "Norms of war in Japanese Religion," in eds. Vesselin Popovski, Gregory Reichberg and Nicholas Turner.

<sup>95</sup> Daisaku Ikeda, "Opinion: Shared Action for a Nuclear Weapon Free World," *Inter Press Service*, 9 April 2015.

<sup>96</sup> "Activists en route to United Nations conference arrive Friday in WNY," *The Buffalo News*, 8 April 2015.

<sup>97</sup> Donald K. Swearer, "Buddhism and weapons of mass destruction: an oxymoron?," in eds. Sohail H. Hashmi and Steven P. Lee.

non-combatants and compliance with the principles of prudence, reciprocity, reconciliation after victory but also self-defense.

This vision of legitimate warfare characterizing inter-state relationship, which obeys to codes, remained predominant during Indian history, with rare exceptions such as the second half of the rule of King Ashoka (which was probably Buddhist), marked by a rejection of violence and war. It is still quite valid today for the modern Indian Republic, whose policy favors realism and puts forward national interests and balance of power, and on occasions draws on various mythological references of the Hindu tradition to justify choices of strategy and military tactics. In this context, the BJP built its international policy from the 1980s by rejecting Gandhi and Nehru's call for moral consideration. In its call to build a Hindu bomb in answer to the Islamic bomb, the BJP mixed Indian nationalism and Hinduism. Because of its role in the decision to move forward with the nuclear tests of 1998, it became very difficult to question nuclear deterrence on religious grounds, which may be the reason why Hindu thinkers are very discreet on the question.<sup>98</sup> The rare internal critics against India's nuclear program came from lay representatives and did not mention in any way the Hindu ethics.

The specificity of the Hindu theological syllabus makes it uneasy to determine to what extent nuclear weapons and Hinduism could be truly compatible. On the one side, these weapons are difficult to use while respecting the principles of proportionality and fair fighting. On the other side, some sources of authorities seem to validate them since what could be considered as weapons of mass destruction were used in mythological Hindu texts, and since some Kings seen as just have put forward the rightness of adapting to circumstances, using contestable expedients in last resort or applying less than orthodox strategies, provided it be the only way to fight an injustice or as long as it has already been used by the adversary.

Besides, the concept of holding back the enemy, minimizing the risk of war thanks to the possession of an adequate arsenal or to fight between equals with the same weapons are present in Hinduism. As it is, after centuries of domination, the religious and national interests tend to become a common cause, which has been used to justify the rise of India as a military power after 1947 to keep its independence but also its status and emancipation on the international scene. Contemporary Indian philosophes, clearly influenced by the fall of the Moghul Empire and colonization, criticize weakness as fueling temptation in hostile powers, in a context of permanent struggle against nations. These perceptions are not far from the basis of political Hinduism as promoted by the BJP. For others, the question of peace is mostly a personal effort which can later have an impact on society. In this context, it would be vain to want to engage into a nuclear disarmament process before setting the conditions of sustainable peace.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Kushik Roy, "Norms of war in Hinduism," in eds. Vesselin Popovski, Gregory Reichberg and Nicholas Turner.

<sup>99</sup> Mātā Amritanandamayī Devī, Access the statements of Amma at the United Nations World Peace Summit in 2000

*"Peace is not just the absence of war and conflict; it goes well beyond that. Peace must be fostered within the individual, within the family and within society. Simply transferring the world's nuclear weapons to a museum will not in itself bring about world peace. The nuclear weapons of the mind must first be eliminated."*

Gandhi's indignation against violence and war, but also against nuclear weapons, which he accused of having destroyed the laws of war,<sup>100</sup> left forever an imprint in India's society. However, these feelings and values are not the inheritance of a strong religious tradition, since Hinduism, both in its Ancient sacred texts and in its contemporary conception expressed by the BJP, does not oppose violence, and even extreme violence, in the defense of a just cause and national sovereignty.

## Conclusion

This overview shows that the issue of the compatibility between nuclear deterrence and religion needs to be nuanced, and remains a matter of interpretation and therefore strongly linked to the political and geopolitical context. Even if some extracts from the major sacred texts are noteworthy because they seem to offer clues on the morality of nuclear weapons (proportionality in the Bible, prohibition of random environmental destruction in the Coran...), these founding books can naturally not give precise injunctions on weapons that had yet to be invented.

Beyond the major principles specific to each religion, it is therefore useful to take into account how religious authorities and theologians have construed them over the years. In all cases studied, these interpretations have been very varied, and they have been influenced by the context in which they were produced. Since the end of the Cold War, the advance of democracy worldwide has given the opportunity to more clergymen to speak freely on this issue. Nevertheless, they still tend to align themselves with respective national positions. The more pacifist stance of the American Catholic authorities at the end of the 1980s compared to their West German counterparts is probably the fruit of a different threat assessment. Likewise, the balanced statements of the Dalai-Lama on the Indian nuclear capacity may show the influence of political closeness on religious matters.

That being said, the different religion's stands keep some theological peculiarities to this day, and remain quite influential. On a closer look, if all the religions studied in this paper condemn the use of nuclear weapons, which is not surprising, opinions on the morality of deterrence as such are more subtle, as this strategy rely on nuclear weapons but does not require its detonation. The Pope's very strict position in that matter seems both quite recent and marginal, except for some Protestant denominations (especially the Methodists and the Church of Scotland) and Muslim branches. For many other religions, the principle of deterrence may be acceptable if it avoids even worse destruction in conventional wars.

The majority thinking is therefore a sort of cost-benefit analysis, which was the solution adopted by the Vatican until the end of the Cold War. Modifications in the security environment convinced the Holy See that the cost and especially the risk of nuclear detonation was now too high regarding the benefit of deterrence. This analysis is not

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<sup>100</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, in ed. Louis Fisher, *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology of his Writings on His Life, Work and Ideas*, Vintage Spiritual Classics, New York, 1962.

*“So far as I can see, the atomic bomb has deadened the finest feeling that has sustained for ages. There used to be so-called laws of war, which made it tolerable. Now we know the truth. War knows no law except that of might. The atomic bomb brought an empty victory but it resulted for the time being in destroying the soul of Japan. What has happened to the soul of the destroying nation is yet too early to see....”*

shared universally and is not necessarily true in all regions of the world and in the future. As such, it is unlikely that a major interreligious movement will be created in the near future to contest with one voice the morality of deterrence, especially in non-Catholic countries where it is an important feature of national security preoccupations (Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Israel...). In Europe and in the United States however, where Christian nuclear pacifism is rather well established, the voice of the Churches may be added to those of civil society representatives to ask for a review of the issue of the morality of the nuclear deterrent. The clear stand taken by the Church of England and the Church of Scotland against the renewal of Trident in the United Kingdom are significant in this regard.