



Morality, Ethics and the Bomb

Suggested Curriculum Links

Scotland - Curriculum for Excellence:

Religious and Moral Education - Christianity, Values & Issues RME 4-02a, RME 4-02b, World Religions, Values & Issues RME 3-05a, RME 4-05a, Development of Beliefs & Values RME 0-07a / 1-07a / RME 2-07a / RME 3-07a / RME 4-07a, RME 1-08a / RME 2-08a / RME 3-08a / RME 4-08a, RME 2-09b, RME 3-09a, RME 4-09a, RME 4-09b, RME 3-09c, RME 2-09d, RME 3-09d, RME 4-09d, RME 4-09e

People, past events and societies (History): SOC 4-01a, SOC 4-06a, SOC 3-06b, SOC 4-06b

People in society, economy and business (Modern Studies): SOC 3-15a, SOC 4-15a

Listening and talking (Literacy): LIT 3-09a, LIT 4-09a, LIT 3-10a

Social wellbeing (Health and wellbeing): HWB 4-09a

England - Key Stages:

KS3 Religious Education - Global issues, KS3 / KS4 Religious Education (Ultimate questions, Moral & Ethical Issues), KS3 Citizenship - Debating a global issue, KS3 Citizenship - Dealing with conflict, KS4 Citizenship - Global citizenship, KS3 English - Language & Skills, KS4 English - Speaking & Listening, KS3 History - World War Two & Aftermath, KS4 History - The Cold War

Teacher's Notes

This unit aims to give pupils the opportunity to investigate for themselves the moral arguments surrounding the possession and use of Nuclear Weapons. They will look at the difference between Moral and Ethical viewpoints and develop their thinking skills through a variety of activities – research, discussion and writing by looking at Religious and non-religious viewpoints, Human conscience, Cost & Benefit of Nuclear weapons, Political stances and Individuals throughout history who have changed conditions in the world for the better.

Booklet

The booklet begins by considering in general what is meant by morality, ethics and the law before relating this to the possession of nuclear weapons. Pupils will be able to study viewpoints and reach considered opinions through extensive research and debate in groups. Topics include:

- Morality, Ethics and Law
- Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Moral issues with Nuclear Weapons
- International Laws & Treaties
- The Nuclear Deterrent
- Schools of moral philosophy

Videos & Presentations

An introductory video is available and a Powerpoint presentation can be used in conjunction with the 'Just War' challenge. Links to short videos introducing 'utilitarianism' and 'deontology' are included in the references.

Challenges

In this unit, the challenges are loosely categorised into Broad General Education (BGE) and senior (S) levels:

- **If you love this planet** (BGE/S) - A worksheet activity to accompany a video looking at the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The work carried out for this treaty received a Nobel Peace Prize. It leads the pupils to consider moral issues about the UK's possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).
- **Just War and the bomb** (BGE) - How does religion accommodate war? A Powerpoint presentation with worksheets examining the meaning of a 'Just War' and relating this to nuclear weapons
- **Chest Cavity thought experiment** (BGE) - A moral dilemma which helps explore the reality of nuclear weapons.
- **Where would you draw the line?** (BGE) - A flow diagram with questions to help explore personal morality regarding nuclear weapons
- **If it is illegal, is it immoral?** (S) - A discussion of morals, ethics and the law through the lens of UN treaties.
- **Moral Philosophy and the bomb** (S) – How two schools of moral philosophy, Utilitarianism and Deontology help us understand the use of the atomic bomb at the end of WWII.
- **Austerity and the Bomb** (BGE/S) - A 'shopping' activity to prioritise public spending
- **Alternatives to War**, Conflict Resolution (S) - This challenge considers the alternatives to war and nuclear deterrence.

Teacher's Notes

Resources and References

References for Booklet - Morality, Ethics and Law

Moral vs Ethical – definitions www.dictionary.com/e/moral-vs-ethical/
[www.diffen.com/difference/Ethics vs Morals](http://www.diffen.com/difference/Ethics_vs_Morals) and www.grammarist.com/usage/ethics-morals/
Criminality of Nuclear Weapons www.nuclearweapons-warcrimes.org
Moral Debate & Nuclear Weapons www.ethicsandinternationalaffairs.org/2013/the-gordian-knot

Reference for Booklet – Nuclear Deterrent

UK Government policy paper on nuclear deterrent www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nuclear-deterrence-factsheet/uk-nuclear-deterrence-what-you-need-to-know

References for Booklet – Schools of moral philosophy

Introduction to Ethics and Utilitarianism (short video) www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/wiphi/wiphi-value-theory/wiphi-ethics/v/utilitarianism-part-1
Introduction to Kant and Deontology (short video) www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwOCmJevigw

References for Challenge – If you love this planet

To accommodate differences in comprehension of complex morals issues concerning nuclear weapons, the first page of this challenge has been made suitable for younger pupils or 'BGE' level and the second for a more advanced senior 'S' level.

ICAN's short video "If You Love This Planet" is required viewing for this challenge:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9c6_qobMko (narrated by Setsuko Thurlow, Hiroshima survivor)
UK not attending TPNW: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/un-nuclear-disarmament-talks-uk-government-not-attend-caroline-lucas-mp-reckless-irresponsible-123-a7631546.html

References for Challenge - Where would you draw the line?

Nuclear Morality Flowchart <http://nuclearmorality.com/interactive/interactive.html>
Pacifism http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/war/against/pacifism_1.shtml
Thou Shalt Not Kill https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thou_shalt_not_kill
Collateral Damage https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collateral_damage
Aerial Bombardment [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aerial bombardment and international law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aerial_bombardment_and_international_law)
Global Abolition of Nuclear Weapons <http://www.cnduk.org/campaigns/global-abolition/legalities>

References for Challenge – Chest Cavity thought experiment

Alex Wellerstein 'The Heart of Deterrence': blog.nuclearsecrecy.com/2012/09/19/the-heart-of-deterrence/

References for Challenge – Austerity and the Bomb

Cost-Benefit Analysis: <http://foreignpolicynews.org/2015/01/09nuclear-capability-cost-benefit>
Detailed analysis by the STUC demonstrating that nuclear weapons are a very poor 'jobs creation scheme':
<http://www.stuc.org.uk/files/Congress%202015/DefenceDiversificationReport2014%20v2.pdf>

References for Challenge – Moral Philosophy and the bomb

BBC Radio "In Our Time" on philosophies of Kant: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0952zl3>
and Utilitarianism <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05xhwqf> (see Moral Philosophy Booklet references above for simpler videos for beginners)

Teacher's Notes

Resources and References (contd.)

This challenge examines in more detail utilitarianism and deontology through the lens of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki - recent evidence that these attacks had less influence on Japan's decision to surrender is considered.

Article from 2013 describing the Soviet Union's role in ending the war with Japan:

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/05/30/the-bomb-didnt-beat-japan-stalin-did/>

Youtube presentation by Ward Wilson author of "Five Myths about Nuclear Weapons - rethinking nuclear weapons policy based on recently uncovered Cold War archives

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBX5vo1KBiw>

References for Challenge – Just War / Religious viewpoints:

Faith groups religionnews.com/2017/07/08/faith-groups-welcome-adoption-of-nuclear-ban-treaty/

Nuclear war quotations <https://wagingpeacetoday.blogspot.com/p/nuclear-quotes.html>

Church of Scotland's Rev Dr Richard Frazer 2016 letter to MPs before their vote on Trident: (also see '[Just War](#)' PowerPoint presentation) "As Christians we are called to be peacemakers and yet 'peace' that is kept through the indiscriminate threat of mass destruction could not be further from the peace that Christ calls us to. Over recent turbulent weeks, we have had cause to reflect on the importance of leadership in our political life. One act of profound leadership for the world would be a decision by our country to renounce our dependence on weapons of war that have no moral legitimacy"

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news_and_events/news/2016/church_condemns_rush_to_vote_on_trident

Roman Catholic Church <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2017/03/28/pope-francis-calls-elimination-nuclear-weapons/> and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/1169864.stm>

Episcopal/Anglican <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/17-june/news/uk/synod>

Islam <https://wagingpeacetoday.blogspot.com/2012/07/is-islam-compatible-with-nuclear-weapons.html>

Buddhist <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/soka-gakkai-urges-nuclear-disarmament-at-vatican-conference>

Judaism <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/nuclear-war-and-mass-destruction-in-judaism/>

Quakers <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/peace/nuclear-disarmament>

References for Challenge – Austerity and the bomb

Scottish Government Housing statistics 2018 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-statistics-scotland-2018-key-trends-summary/pages/13/>

References for Challenge – Just war and the Bomb

'Just War' PowerPoint presentation: www.peaceeducationscotland.org/docs/morality-just-war-theory.ppt

Within Islam, Abu Bakr, one of the prophet's closest companions, is revered by Sunni muslims, but Shia muslims follow the prophet's son-in-law and cousin Ali. What is important to us is Abu Bakr's position in determining Islamic military jurisprudence - the humane treatment of the population of Jerusalem after capture by Saladin in 1187 was a demonstration of ethical principles at a time when in Christian Europe slavery and slaughter was much more common.

BBC Religion, Islam & War <https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/islamethics/war.shtml>

Teacher's Notes

Resources and References (contd.)

References for Challenge – Alternatives to war

Iraqi sanctions quote from former US secretary of state Madeleine Albright (who was a refugee from Nazi Germany). https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Madeleine_Albright and <https://web.archive.org/web/20040604144439/http://www.fas.org/news/iraq/1998/02/19/98021907tpo.html>

Response from SCND activist and devout Christian Brian Quail to the 'Continuous at sea deterrence service' in Westminster Abbey: <https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2019/04/02/thanking-god-for-nuclear-weapons/>

Westminster Abbey Press release about the 'continuous at sea deterrence' service <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-news/continuous-at-sea-deterrent>

Hansard: January 2015, House of Commons debate on the renewal of Trident – includes politician's speeches on their moral objections to nuclear weapons <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm150120/debtext/150120-0003.htm>

Other References & Challenges

Useful introductory video:

BBC: "The Atomic Bomb" GCSE history - exploring the development and deployment of the first atomic bomb, the moral dilemma faced by scientists of the Manhattan Project, and the fallout from the detonation of the bomb over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. [Warning: Contains upsetting and disturbing scenes] <https://www.bbc.com/teach/class-clips-video/history-ks3-gcse-the-atomic-bomb/z6nyrj6>

Pacifists and 'Good' Human beings:

A possible further challenge is to list people who are perceived as 'good' or 'moral' human beings such as Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr - what they have done and how they helped humanity.

Utilitarianism:

The greatest happiness principle - morally appropriate behaviour which will not harm others. Look at the dates of birth and death of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). They were thinking about moral and ethical behaviour 300 hundred years ago. Find websites on 'Utilitarianism' for investigation.

Political Power:

Use <https://www.writetothem.com/> to write a letter to a Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP), or UK Parliament (MP), of whichever political party e.g. SNP, Labour, Conservative, Green, Liberal Democrat etc. asking for their party's policy on nuclear weapons and the UK's compliance with the 2017 international Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Also ask for their views on the **morality** and **ethics** of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) which kill non-combatants.

Teacher's Notes

Resources and References (contd.)

References for Booklet – International Laws & Treaties

Date	Title	Brief Description	Results
2017	TPNW	The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. A treaty promoted by civil society throughout the world (i.e. NOT governments) to abolish all nuclear weapons.	Too early to tell. As of September 2019, 122 countries have signed it, and 26 ratified it.
2010	Convention on Cluster Munitions	This treaty prohibits cluster bombs, whose sub munitions last for years after dispersal, and are often played with and cripple young children.	Although became law when enough states ratified it, The United States, Russia and China have not signed
1999	Ottawa Treaty aka Mine Ban Treaty	A treaty to outlaw anti-personnel land mines.	Although became law when enough states ratified it, The United States, Russia and China have not signed
1997	CWC Chemical Weapons Convention	A treaty to outlaw the production, storage and use of chemical weapons	Estimates at November 2018, that 96.62% of the world's chemical weapons stock has been destroyed. 193 countries have accepted it.
1975	BTWC Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention	A treaty to outlaw what is popularly called "Germ Warfare"	Regularly reviewed by a conference every five years, this treaty is largely successful, although only about 50% of the 180+ countries who have signed it submit the annual voluntary reports.
1969	NPT	The Non-proliferation Treaty. A treaty promoted by those countries that had nuclear weapons, to try and prevent their spread to countries that did not have them.	Four countries – India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea acquired Nuclear weapons after the treaty became law – NK withdrew from the treaty to develop them, the others did not sign.
1949	Geneva Conventions	Four Conventions agreed to consolidate agreements made between 1864 and 1929 about the treatment of prisoners of war, the use of chemical weapons, and the treatment of civilians.	Some success. However asymmetric warfare brings into play non-governmental agencies. Often honoured in the breach, e.g. "your country is not behaving in a way compliant with Geneva conventions"

Booklet

Morality, Ethics and Law

Before we consider the morality of nuclear weapons, it will help to think about our understanding of morals and ethics.

Ethics and morals both relate to “right” and “wrong” conduct. While they are sometimes used interchangeably, they are different:

- **Morals** refer to an individual’s own principles regarding right and wrong. (e.g. honesty, integrity, justice, fair play and decency)
- **Ethics** refer to rules provided by an external source, rules of conduct (e.g. in workplaces or the military), standards of behaviour and religious ideals.

So, while the two nouns are closely related, the main difference is that **morals** are more abstract, subjective, often personal or religion-based, while **ethics** are more practical, conceived as shared principles promoting fairness in social and business interactions.

Sometimes ethical standards are regulated by the **law**.

For example, a politician’s sex scandal may involve a **moral** lapse (a subjective judgment – which might not be viewed as seriously by others), while a politician taking money from a company he is supposed to regulate is an **ethical** problem - and possibly **illegal**.



When we discuss **morality** we often have to discuss **ethics** and the **law** as well.

Views of what is moral, ethical and legal can sometimes change over the course of history.

Slavery was **legal** in the British Empire for a very long time. However, many people considered it **immoral** for a long time before it became **illegal**.

Helping slaves escape their fate in the southern states of America in the first part of the nineteenth century was **illegal**, but those who helped the slaves to escape felt it was their **moral duty** to do so. After the UK’s ‘Slavery Abolition Act’ of 1833, slavery was deemed as **immoral**, **unethical** and **illegal**.



Our historical perspective helps us be clearer about the rights and wrongs of slavery. However, in earlier times there were many voices on both sides of the argument.

The Christian Bible contains passages which seem to condone slavery:

“Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh” - 1 Peter 2:18

Today our **moral**, **ethical** and **legal** responses to slavery are in alignment, and there are no Christian churches defending it.

Booklet

Morality, Ethics and Law (contd.)

Can you or your group pick another issue, such as **animal welfare**, and consider if it is viewed as moral, ethical or legal? For example:

- Fox hunting
- Docking dogs' tails
- Foie Gras (making pâté from goose liver, by force feeding geese until their death)

Consider these statements:

- I approve of hunting foxes; they are vermin and spread disease, I think it is morally sound.
- The SSPCA says hunting foxes is cruel, and therefore it is unethical.
- Hunting foxes with dogs is illegal

Does this exercise become more difficult when you have to consider these conflicting statements?

Many **moral** issues make us angry and emotional, such as animal rights and the death penalty.

Can you or your group give two more moral issues you have an emotional reaction about?

Our concepts of **ethics** have been derived from religions, philosophies and cultures and are used in debates on topics such as: human rights, abortion and gender issues. In general, ethics are practical rules, agreed by a group as correct conduct. Some ethical standards might conflict with an individual's personal morality.

Can you or your group give two other examples of debates where ethics are considered?

It can be helpful to take a philosophical approach to moral issues - looking at ethical rules and principles that allow us to take a less emotional view.

Ethics attempts to provide a sequence of steps so that we can find our way through difficult issues. Using such a framework, two people who are arguing a moral issue can often find that they disagree only on one part of an issue and broadly agree on everything else.

For many ethical issues there **isn't a single right answer**, and they can only aim to eliminate confusion and clarify the issues. It is then up to the individual to come to their own conclusions.

Booklet

Weapons of Mass Destruction

There are several types of weapons that are considered Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) because they can kill or significantly harm large numbers of humans, or cause tremendous damage to human-made, natural structures or the biosphere.

Three main weapons of mass destruction are:

1. **Chemical weapon** - a toxic chemical contained in a delivery system such as a bomb or shell used to kill or significant harm humans. The toxic chemicals can be categorised as choking, blister, blood, or nerve agents. Well known agents include: chlorine and mustard gases, cyanide, sarin
2. **Biological weapon** - (also known as germ warfare) a biological toxin or infectious agents such as bacteria, viruses and fungi used to kill or significantly harm humans, animals or plants
3. **Nuclear weapon** - a bomb which uses the considerable amounts of energy released by nuclear reactions ('splitting the atom') to kill or severely harm large numbers of people, and cause tremendous damage to homes, city structures and the environment.

What are the main moral and ethical issues with using WMD?

Biological and chemical weapons are currently illegal but nuclear weapons are not yet illegal.
NB. they may soon be illegal too – research online using keywords “ICAN” and “2017 TPNW”:

Some people think that nuclear weapons are ethical and others think they are not ethical.
Why do you think there is a difference of opinion?

The symbols for **Nuclear**, **Biological** and **Chemical** weapons are shown below.

Under the symbol, write a reason why this type of weapon should or should not be used.



Booklet

Moral issues with Nuclear Weapons

There are three broad areas with moral implications regarding nuclear weapons.

1. Production and maintenance

Research and development (including nuclear tests), production and maintenance of nuclear weapons can be viewed as diverting resources and talent from peaceful and useful activities.

- Identify the moral issues

2. Possession

The possession of nuclear weapons can be viewed by others as threatening. The threat of use can give a country status with unequal power in the international community.

- Identify the moral issues

3. Use

One opinion is that we use these weapons every day. When our submarines are on patrol, they are deterring our enemies. We did not build them in order to use them.

Another opinion is that threatening our enemies with annihilation is the behaviour of a bully.

- Identify the moral issues

Can you find something positive and negative to say about each of these?

For example, *“production and maintenance creates well-paid jobs”*.

Area	Positive effect of Nuclear weapons	Negative effect of Nuclear weapons
Production and maintenance		
Possession		
Use		

Does owning nuclear weapons make us safe or make us a target?

Booklet

International Laws and Treaties

A **treaty** is a formal written agreement entered into by sovereign states and international organizations

Under international law, a treaty is a **legally binding** agreement between nations.

There are two main treaties that relate to nuclear weapons:

1. The **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** is a treaty promoted by those countries that have nuclear weapons, to try and prevent their spread to countries that do not have them. Four countries – India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea have acquired Nuclear weapons since the treaty became law – North Korea withdrew from the treaty in order to develop them, while the others did not sign it. The NPT was supposed to help make the United Nations deliver its very first resolution – to abolish nuclear weapons.

Is it fair that some countries have nuclear weapons and some don't?

2. The **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)** was passed by 122 countries at the UN in 2017, but by 2019 still had to collect enough ratifications in individual country's parliaments to become law. This law was proposed by civil society and countries without nuclear weapons. No country that has nuclear weapons attended the United Nations' sessions to discuss it, or voted when it was passed. There is no compulsion for countries with nuclear weapons to abolish them unless they sign this treaty.

Most of the world's countries do not want nuclear weapons. How do you think the nuclear weapons states should react to this?

Booklet

The Nuclear Deterrent

A justification for having nuclear weapons is that they act as a deterrent. For a deterrent to be effective, the opposition must fear that if the deterrent was used the consequences for them would outweigh the advantages of their proposed act.

The British Government states:

“our retention of an independent centre of nuclear decision-making makes clear to any adversary that the costs of an attack on UK vital interests will outweigh any benefits”

All the UK's military defences are meant to deter but the nuclear weapon is special because it will only be used if other methods are thought inadequate and the word “deterrent” is used to emphasise this.

Since Russia and China are very strong military powers the UK has to have great strength to deter them.

Highlight or underline the word ‘deterrent’ in the passage above.

Write your own definition of what a deterrent is:

In groups or pairs discuss the following questions:

Does our society encourage the carrying of weapons as a deterrent, on a personal level?

Do you think it is right to describe the UK's nuclear weapons as a ‘deterrent’?

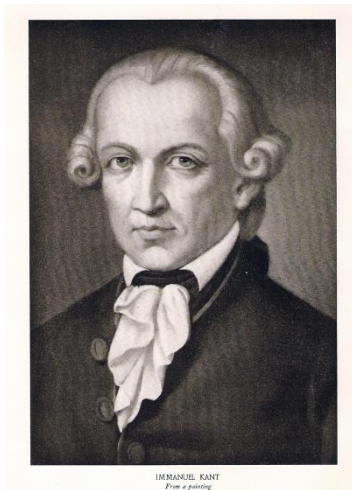
Is it moral for the UK to have nuclear weapons?

Booklet

Schools of moral philosophy

Two schools of moral philosophy become particularly important when we think about the use of nuclear weapons.

- **Deontological** thinking states that an action's moral value is fixed.
- **Utilitarianism** is the belief that the morally 'right' actions, are those which provoke the greatest 'good', or 'happiness', and minimise the 'bad'.



One example of deontological thinking is the philosophy of **Immanuel Kant** (1724 - 1804).

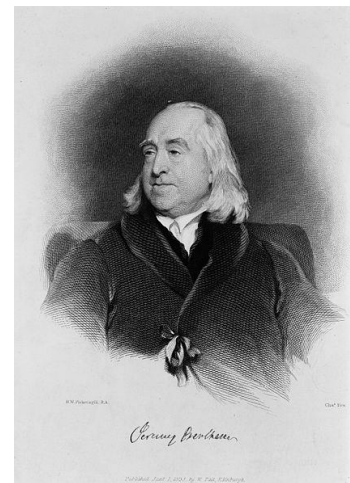
Kant believed that **every action is intrinsically right or wrong, no matter the circumstances or consequences.**

He argued that people should only act on principles (*maxims*) that we would want every person to act on (for example, the principle to *never commit murder*).

An example of a utilitarian philosopher is **Jeremy Bentham** (1748 - 1832).

Bentham believed **the moral value of an act depends on how much happiness can be derived from it.**

Bentham was trying to find a logical method for quantifying happiness, to help judge each action almost mathematically. Bentham took into account things like how many people would be affected by the act, for how long, and how intensely.

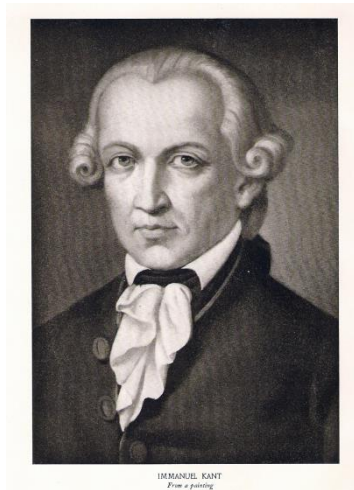


Utilitarianism is a form of **Consequentialism**, an ethical theory which suggests that the moral value of an action depend on the consequences of that action - a morally right act is thought to be one that will produce a good outcome, or consequence.

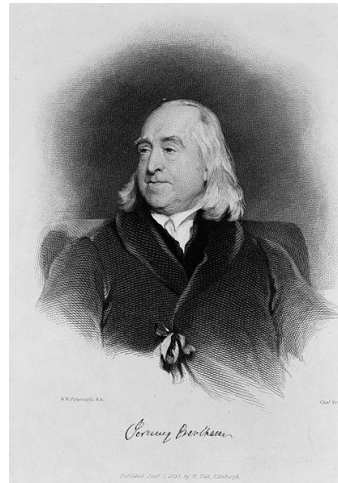
Booklet

Schools of moral philosophy (contd.)

Task: Match the speech bubble to the philosopher



Immanuel Kant



Jeremy Bentham

- Can you identify who might have said what? Link the speech bubble to the philosopher.

“The use of a nuclear weapon can stop a war and prevent greater bloodshed. Fewer people overall will lose their lives, therefore they are morally good”

“The use of a nuclear weapon is wrong. If every country fired nuclear weapons, the world as we know it would end. If only certain countries are allowed to do it, no

“We should weigh up the suffering caused by nuclear weapons against the happiness caused by the employment opportunities they create”

“The use of a weapon of mass destruction causes the mass killing of humans. This is intrinsically wrong.”

“Everyone’s happiness is equally important. We should concentrate on minimising suffering.”

Challenge

If you love this planet

Setsuko Thurlow was a 13-year-old schoolgirl when the United States dropped an atomic bomb on her city, Hiroshima in Japan. Eight of her family members and 351 of her schoolmates and teachers died in the attack. She and other survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (known as 'Hibakusha') have since campaigned for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

On 7th July 2017 she addressed the United Nations (UN). This was the day that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted. She received a standing ovation from the diplomats at the UN after her speech which was addressed to all world leaders.



[See film clip: ["If you love this planet"](#)]

In the film Setsuko, who lost many of her school friends, when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, says that we should never again risk the lives of children being lost because of nuclear war taking place.

- Is she right?
- Can you think of anything else that she said in the film about other things to do with nuclear weapons, that had made her unhappy and angry?



Hiroshima – one of few buildings left standing is now a permanent memorial

Setsuko said to the United Nations:

“ To the leaders of the countries across the world, I beseech you: if you love this planet, you will sign this treaty.

Nuclear weapons have always been immoral. Now they are also illegal. Together, let us go forth and change the world "

122 countries out of 193 countries voted in favour of the motion.

The United Kingdom did not sign the treaty.

Challenge

If you love this planet (contd.)

Highlight the moral issues Setsuko raises when she says the following:

“The failed nuclear weapon policies”

“We will not return to funding nuclear violence instead of human needs”

“We will not return to irreversibly contaminating our planet”

“We will not continue to risk the lives of future generations.”

To date, Britain has not signed the treaty and refused to attend the proceedings at the UN that discussed it.

In contrast to the British government’s position, the Dutch parliament instructed the Dutch government to attend. The catalyst was a 45,000-signature petition that obliged the parliament to discuss attending, and despite government opposition attendance at the UN conference was agreed. The Dutch government delegation voted against adopting the treaty. Their policy is that nuclear weapons should only be banned once there are none left.

An article in the Independent newspaper in March 2017 reported:

“ The Government has been called “reckless and irresponsible” after it refused to send a single representative to United Nations (UN) talks about a ban on nuclear weapons. The Foreign Office revealed that no one from the UK attended a February meeting ahead of the negotiations and no one would go to the discussions when they take place later this month. It was responding to a parliamentary question by Green Party co-leader Caroline Lucas, who told The Independent that it showed the Government was being “massively hypocritical” and failing in its commitment to working towards a world without nuclear weapons. “I don’t think it’s taking nuclear disarmament seriously and it’s hugely reckless and irresponsible,” she said. “

Consider the following questions then compare with your answers with others in the class:

1. Was it immoral of the UK government not to send representatives to the United Nations talks on the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons?
2. Are nuclear weapons immoral?
3. Do we have a moral responsibility to monitor our political representatives and take action if we disagree with them?

Challenge

Just War and the Bomb

The existence of war is morally challenging. Every moral code in history, whether based on religious faith or not, has required the support of a moral argument to justify the killing of others. In Western Europe our thinking about this moral question can be traced back to early Christian **Saint Augustine**. He argued that war was acceptable if it was **defensive** and its purpose was to **restore peace**. This thinking has influenced discussions on the matter since.



Three principles of 'Just War' theory that are relevant to nuclear war are

1. **Discrimination**
2. **Proportionality**
3. **Probability of success**

1. Discrimination

The nature of the killing has changed throughout time, especially the proportion of combatant to non-combatant casualties. This is a key part of the new moral dilemma created by nuclear weapons. Before WW2, the majority of casualties in war were soldiers and sailors, but during WW2 more civilians died than soldiers. Nuclear weapons do not discriminate.

2. Proportionality

This principle considers the limits of death and destruction within the theatre of war from a moral perspective. At the end of WW2, a new technology was demonstrated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki that evaporated those cities, and showed that instead of thousands at risk from hundreds of bombers, millions were at risk from just one bomb. Indeed, the whole world could be destroyed.

If our enemy kills everyone in Britain in a nuclear attack, is it "proportional" to kill everyone in our enemy's country?

Challenge

Just War and the Bomb (contd.)

3. Probability of success

How might success look after a nuclear war? The consequences arising from a nuclear war are better understood now than they were in 1945 when Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed. Then, little was understood about the devastating long-term impact of radiation upon people's health, or of the catastrophic consequences for the environment, which sustains our life on earth. The volume of debris sent in to the atmosphere would cause the sun to be blocked, causing a '**nuclear winter**'. The reduction in plant photosynthesis would create a famine with negative consequences for humanity. Survivors would be competing for resources to keep them alive and extinction could not be ruled out.

Would a world with all human life terminated, restore peace as Saint Augustine understood it?

The religion of Islam is equally committed to establishing the terms of engagement in war - the following quotation is almost as old as St. Augustine's teachings on Just War:

"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, especially those which are fruitful. 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."

Abu Bakr, the first Caliph,
632 before the invasion of
Syria.

In what ways are Abu Bakr's instructions to his soldiers different from St Augustine's views about war?

Today we are aware of the dire consequences for humanity if nuclear weapons are used.

We have the capacity to make informed decisions as to whether their use can be justified.

Challenge

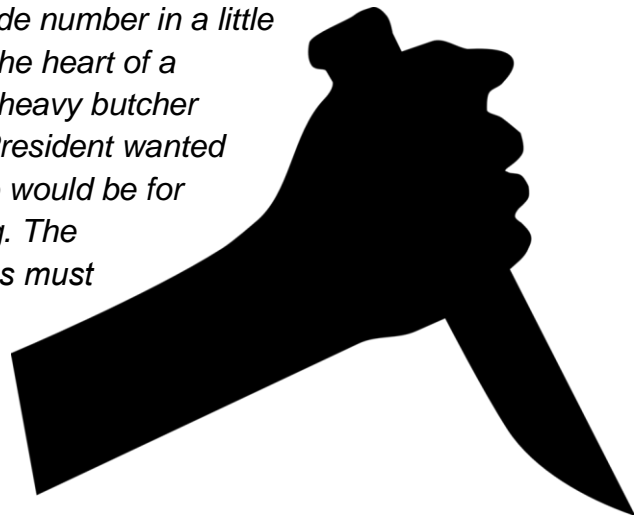
Chest Cavity thought experiment

[Content warning: description of violence]

In 1981, Harvard law professor Roger Fisher, published a thought experiment in [the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists](#): what if the codes to launch nuclear war were kept inside the chest-cavity of a young volunteer, and the President would have to hack them out of this young man's chest before he could commence armageddon?

“ There is a young man, probably a Navy officer, who accompanies the President. This young man has a black attaché case which contains the codes that are needed to fire nuclear weapons. I could see the President at a staff meeting considering nuclear war as an abstract question. He might conclude: “On SLOP Plan One, the decision is affirmative, Communicate the Alpha line XYZ.” Such jargon holds what is involved at a distance.

My suggestion was quite simple: Put that needed code number in a little capsule, and then implant that capsule right next to the heart of a volunteer. The volunteer would carry with him a big, heavy butcher knife as he accompanied the President. If ever the President wanted to fire nuclear weapons, the only way he could do so would be for him first, with his own hands, to kill one human being. The President says, “George, I’m sorry but tens of millions must die.” He has to look at someone and realize what death is—what an innocent death is. Blood on the White House carpet. It’s reality brought home.



When I suggested this to friends in the Pentagon they said, ‘My God, that’s terrible. Having to kill someone would distort the President’s judgment. He might never push the button’.”

Discuss in pairs or groups - does this thought experiment change your perception of the morality of nuclear weapons?

Discuss in orality of nuclear weapons?

Further Challenge – language:

Most official language used to describe nuclear weapons, such as “device”, “capability”, “deterrence” and “asset” is unemotional and euphemistic. Using neutral language removes us from the reality that nuclear bombs are so deadly they would kill vast numbers of human beings – many thousand times more than a knife.

Can you or your group give examples of other ‘neutral’ words used to describe nuclear bombs?

Challenge

Where would YOU draw the line?

Most violence is regarded as wrong and to be avoided if possible. It is generally accepted that, wherever possible, war should be replaced by negotiation and arbitration.

It can be argued that some wars are justified. They should be fought within a set of rules known as the Geneva Convention, first drawn up in 1864. For example: prisoners of war should be humanely treated, and civilians should not be attacked.

Certain weapons are not approved under the Geneva Convention. These include weapons of mass destruction (WMD, for example chemical and biological weapons). In 1997 Britain and some other countries decided that landmines should be banned.

However, these restraints are frequently disregarded. Terror attacks are made on civilians. In World War II whole cities were targeted with high explosives and in the case of Japan, nuclear weapons were dropped by the USA on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Some people refuse to take part in war. They are called pacifists. If they refuse to serve in the army during a time of war when all eligible adults are required to serve. If they are already in the army and refuse to carry out military orders because they believe them to be wrong (e.g. an order to attack unarmed civilians) they are called conscientious objectors.

Challenge

Where would YOU draw the line? (contd.)

- Work in groups of 3 – 4
- Decide in your group which step below is your group's furthest "moral" limit – the point at which you would 'draw the line' and say "NO" to killing people.

1. Would you kill, in some circumstances?

YES - you might kill to defend someone.



NO - You would not kill under any circumstances

→ *You may be a pacifist.*

2. Is it acceptable to kill in self-defence?

YES - you might kill if you were attacked.



NO - you would not kill in self-defence

→ *You may be a pacifist.*

3. May a State, acting in self-defence, kill civilians during military action?

YES - you'd support your country killing people who didn't directly attack you – eg. '*collateral damage*'.



NO - you would not support killing civilians at all

→ *War is unpredictable - you may have to accept responsibility for the deaths of civilians anyway.*

4. May a State, acting in self-defence, kill civilians deliberately?

YES - you would support your country killing civilians deliberately. *These are the standards under which the bombings of cities in WW2 were conducted – which were deemed **illegal** by the Geneva Convention.*



NO - you would not support killing civilians deliberately.

→ *War is unpredictable – if you take military action you may have to accept responsibility for the deaths of civilians anyway.*

5. May a State, using Nuclear Weapons, kill civilians deliberately?

YES - you have accepted that your state may carry out actions which are **illegal under international law**.

NO - you would not support using nuclear weapons to kill civilians.

→ *You may still have to accept responsibility for the deaths of civilians through conventional warfare.*

Challenge

If it is illegal, is it immoral?

Countries do not always follow the rule of law when fighting wars. The United Nations (UN) has produced several treaties to encourage lawful conduct and humane treatment of civilians, with varying degrees of success. All of these treaties required representatives of each country to sign the treaty within the UN itself, and then the government of each country has to ratify the treaty with the legislature of that country.

The oldest of these is the **Geneva Convention** - as old as the United Nations itself - which consolidated many earlier treaties to establish standards of international law for humanitarian treatment in war.

Outrage can lead to change

The process for arriving at such treaties is similar to the process that led to the end of legal slavery. So many people had their personal **morality** outraged by slavery, that it was considered a breach of the prevailing cultural **ethics**, which led in turn to **laws** being passed to prohibit it. Note that despite being illegal throughout the world for a very long time indeed, some slavery still exists.



Nuclear weapons and the law.

There are two international treaties that exist to regulate nuclear weapons:

- The **Non-Proliferation treaty (NPT)** – opened for signature in 1968 – entered force in 1970 when enough countries had signed it.
- The **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)** – opened for signature in 2017.

Celebration photograph as the United Nations Treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons (TPNW) is passed

Both of these treaties were created and are monitored by the United Nations (UN). The UN has no police, courts, or prisons. Enforcement of its treaties is almost impossible.

The **NPT** has three major pillars:

1. Non-proliferation
2. Disarmament
3. The right to peaceful use of nuclear power

Most countries, including Britain, the United States, Russia and China are signatories of the NPT. Since the NPT became law several nations have developed Nuclear weapons. India and Pakistan did not sign, and have created their own nuclear weapons. North Korea withdrew from the treaty before exploding its first nuclear bomb. Israel is not a signatory - it is universally known to have nuclear weapons, but never comments one way or another.

Challenge

If it is illegal, is it immoral? (contd.)

The NPT has been criticised for having failed to achieve any of the three pillars. Many of the nuclear armed states have maintained and renewed their nuclear weapons programmes since signing the treaty. In Britain, parliament voted to renew Trident in July 2016. None of the signatory nations have implemented strategies for complete disarmament, and the treaty does not specify a deadline to do so.

In recent years, we have seen tensions rising between nations over fears about their use of nuclear power. In 2018 the USA did not accept that Iran's uranium refinement was being used for civilian use, and other countries believed the US were not complying with the NPT's 3rd pillar which allows Iran a civilian nuclear power programme.

In groups or pairs discuss the following questions:

- Is there a moral or ethical or legal basis for countries to comply with treaties?
- Does it matter that India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea are not part of the treaty?
- Do they invalidate the whole treaty?
- Is there a moral basis for complying with a law that cannot be enforced?

For those campaigning for an end to nuclear weapons, it seemed a new treaty was needed. Organisations from all over the world came together to form the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). In Scotland, the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (SCND) is the partner organisation. ICAN representatives (members of civil society) worked to create a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (**TPNW**). In 2017, the United Nations opened the vote, and the treaty was passed with over 120 signatures.

However, not all members of the UN attended the vote - none of the nations who currently possess nuclear weapons took part.

One country voted against the TPNW - the government of the Netherlands which supports possession of nuclear weapons. It did not want to attend, but its parliament insisted.

90 days after the fiftieth country ratifies the treaty, the TPNW will become law. Most countries have a long process to ratify such a treaty - as of September 2019, the count is 26.

This is the same process that led to the banning of chemical and biological weapons, and cluster bombs.

The TPNW makes all aspects of nuclear weapons, possession, construction, testing, and research, **illegal**. However only those countries that sign up for it are bound by it.

Do you or your group think this new treaty is humanity's best hope for avoiding nuclear war?

The **NPT** was largely the work of **countries which had nuclear weapons** already, in contrast the **TPNW** was the work of **civil society** rather than the political establishment.

Challenge

If it is illegal, is it immoral? (contd.)

The TPNW could be described as a reaction to failures of the NPT. The NPT had not stopped countries becoming nuclear armed and did not lead to comprehensive disarmament. The right to peaceful use of nuclear power had not helped create a better understanding between, for example, Iran and the United States. In 2018-9 the USA, which possesses the world's second largest nuclear arsenal, refused to accept that Iran's refinement of uranium was for exclusively civilian use

In groups or pairs discuss the following questions:

- Are we discussing **ethics** or **morals** when looking at the behaviour of governments?
- Compare **laws** passed by the Westminster (**UK**) or Holyrood (**Scottish**) parliaments, with the TPNW (**United Nations**) treaty. Is it easier to enforce national or international laws? Why would this be?

Challenge

Moral Philosophy and the bomb

Moral Philosophy is the branch of philosophy that seeks to determine the nature of right and wrong, and how we can categorise actions as being right or wrong. It is also called ethics, and the terms “morality” and “ethics” are used interchangeably perhaps more often than they should. Clearly, the use of atomic weapons could hardly be a bigger challenge to understand from a moral perspective. We will examine just one action, the use of atomic weapons in Japan in August 1945, through the lens of just two schools of moral philosophy, Utilitarianism and Deontology/Kantianism.

In August of 1945, the United States exploded two Atomic bombs over **Hiroshima** and **Nagasaki**. Japan surrendered very shortly after the second explosion.

Utilitarianism is strongly associated with the Philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who talked about the “utility” of an action - its **effect** in the world – as being the only test for right vs wrong. The only effect that he considered as being important was **happiness**. So, if an action increased the total amount of happiness, it was good, and if it reduced the total amount of happiness it was not. So, it is the outcome of an action which determines right from wrong.

Deontology is the opposite of Utilitarianism, in that the **action itself**, not its consequences is what determines right from wrong. This school of philosophy is so closely associated with the work of Immanuel Kant that it is often referred to as Kantianism. His methodology for determining right vs wrong was the exact opposite of utilitarianism. Each individual’s sense of duty to behave in a **righteous** way, such as not killing and not telling lies, and the requirement to take action based on these duties, was key. Additionally, the action chosen should be universally applied, not conditional of the context of the action. Kant says “‘Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law’”. This is Kant’s “Categorical Imperative” - if it is the right thing to do, it is ALWAYS the right thing to do.

Challenge

Moral Philosophy and the bomb (contd.)

By August 1945 the Allied commanders fighting Japan recognised that they had won the war, but Japan would not surrender. With no navy and no air force, an invasion in the south of Japan was imminent, and Japan would be unable to resist the invasion. However, the calculations of the US military suggested that hundreds of thousands of soldiers would die, because the Japanese army was intact.

Was there a way to force Japan to surrender? Negotiations had been going on for months with no progress.

The decision was made to use the atomic bomb against two Japanese cities, to demonstrate that an invasion was not necessary to defeat Japan. Japan surrendered shortly after the second bomb. The bombs killed about 300,000 people, a lot less than the estimated number of deaths following an invasion, and no casualties on the allied side.

This is claimed by proponents of nuclear weapons as a justification for their use. “Nuclear weapons ended the war” is a commonly held belief.

Consider each of the following statements from three perspectives – what do you think, and can you imagine what Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham might think?

Statement	True or false – my answer	True or false – Bentham's answer	True or false – Kant's answer
Dropping the bomb was a good thing, because fewer people died than if it had not been used			
Dropping the bomb ended the war, so was a good thing			
It was wrong, the civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not valid targets			
Using nuclear weapons is always wrong			

- Discuss in pairs or groups – do you think your answers match either of the two schools of philosophy?

Challenge

Moral Philosophy and the bomb (contd.)

In the previous example we have assumed that the reason Japan surrendered was that America dropped two atomic bombs. This was the popular received wisdom for many years. However recent evidence suggests strongly that something else caused Japan's surrender - the entry of the Soviet Union into the war ending the non-aggression pact between Japan and the Soviet Union a year early.

It is only with the benefit of hindsight, and access to the cabinet papers of the Japanese government of the time, that we can now see that dropping the bomb may not have been the catalyst for Japan's surrender. The Soviet Union was days, even hours, away from invading the Japanese mainland from the undefended North. This interpretation of historical facts would say that documented fear of a Soviet invasion was the reason for Japan's surrender.

- How does this new information change our analysis?
- Does this mean the decision to drop the bomb was wrong?
- If Bentham would have dropped the bomb to end the war with the minimum of lives wasted, and now we know that it did not end the war, does that make his decision wrong?
- If we now decide that Bentham was wrong, is that a failure of information (i.e. the information about the imminent Soviet invasion), or is the utilitarian process for determining right from wrong fundamentally flawed?

Challenge

Austerity and the Bomb

Austerity is a word used to describe when people choose to spend less money, or find themselves unable to spend enough money to live a normal life.

Austerity is used by governments to describe difficult economic conditions created by their measures to reduce spending. Sometimes governments reduce the amount of money or things that people can have. An example of this was after the Second World War when there were still shortages of food, and people had special books called ration books which they used to claim the amount of food that the government had decided they could have, so that food was shared fairly. Even sweets were rationed.

As of 2019 some people in the UK affected by Austerity find it difficult to live on the amount of money they have, and have to use food banks to make sure that they can eat properly.

We also hear on the news that the government and local councils are short of money to pay for other things which are important so people can have a decent standard of living – parks, swimming pools and hospitals. Government controls the wages of many of our most important jobs, nurses, teachers and carers who look after the elderly and support people with special needs

Another example of austerity in Scotland is the rise in homelessness. In 2018 around 43,000 people were made homeless and many people cannot afford to either buy an affordable home, or pay rents in the private sector. In 2018 it was recorded that an estimated 131,900 people were on waiting lists for affordable housing in Scotland. It is estimated that it would cost around £5 billion to build 50,000 affordable homes.

Britain's Nuclear Weapons system is called Trident. This is actually the name of the type of nuclear-powered submarine that carries the missiles, each of which has a warhead with multiple nuclear bombs. These submarines are based at Faslane Naval Base which is about thirty miles from Glasgow. These submarines have reached the end of their operational life, and the British government has started a project to replace them.

The amount of that the British Government tells us that it needs to spend on Nuclear Weapons changes a lot. Between £100 and £200 Billion has been mentioned. Government projects of this size have a history of being estimated badly, so the real cost is hard to tell.

Identifying the "lifetime" cost for building, operating and maintaining four nuclear submarines and their missiles is controversial. Figures for £100 billion to £200 billion have been quoted but no-one can give a precise figure and very large government projects often overspend by a considerable amount - so the real cost is hard to tell.

Challenge

Austerity and the Bomb (contd.) – Shopping List

		
Adventure Playground cost £ _____ ?	Nuclear Weapons cost £ _____ ?	Conventional Weapons cost £ _____ ?
		
Warships cost £ _____ ?	Supermarket Sweep with £200 billion	Doctors cost £ _____ ?
		
Hospitals cost £ _____ ?	Nursery Care cost £ _____ ?	Affordable Housing cost £ _____ ?
		
Leisure Facilities cost £ _____ ?	Libraries cost £ _____ ?	Care in the Community cost £ _____ ?
		
Community Nurses cost £ _____ ?	Hospital Nurses cost £ _____ ?	Carers cost £ _____ ?

Challenge

Austerity and the Bomb (contd.)

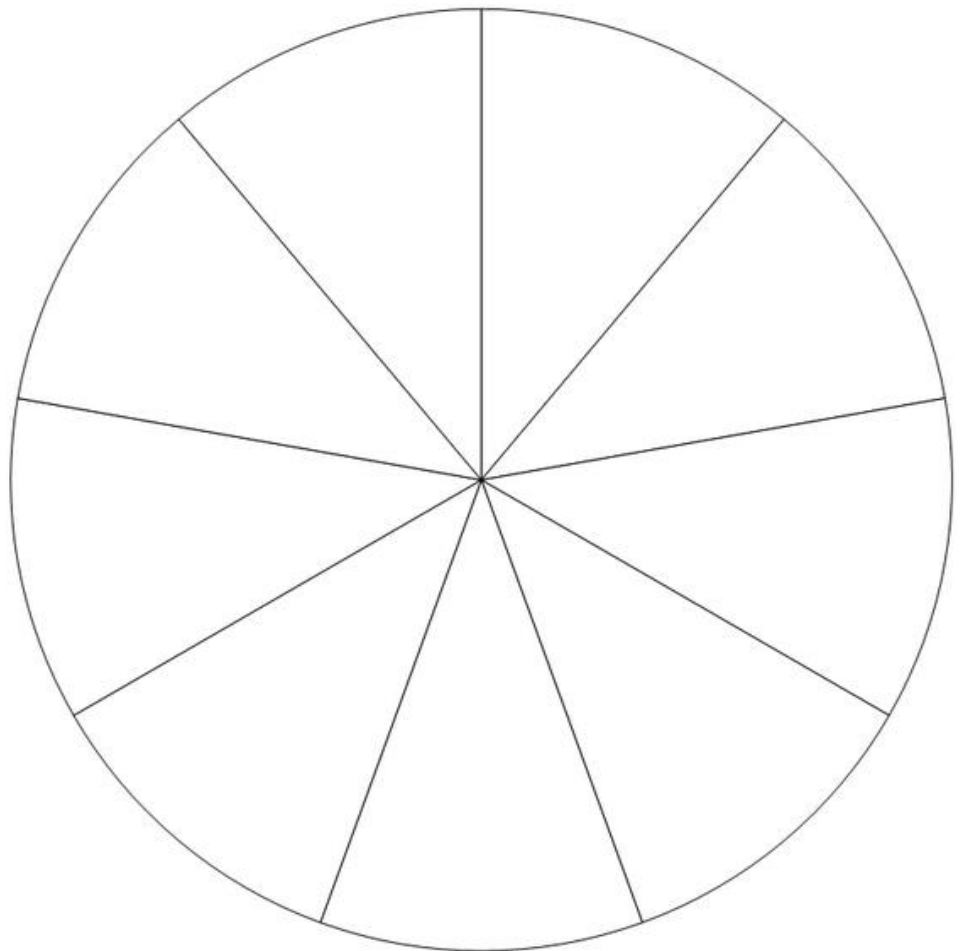
From the 'Shopping List' on the previous page - **what would you put in your shopping trolley?**

We know that around £200 billion may be spent on building, maintaining and running new nuclear weapons. **Is it right to spend this amount of money on weapons of mass destruction during a period of austerity?**

Should there be a moral dimension to allocating budgets?

Can you make a pie chart from the shopping list?

You have to decide how many "slices" and how much money for each slice:



Nuclear Weapons are very expensive. **What is the relationship between money and morality?**

Should money ever be part of a conversation about morality?

Challenge

Alternatives to War

The prospect of war once only threatened those in the armed forces of each country. With the advent of nuclear weapons, war now has the capability of destroying cities full of civilians, the environment and ultimately most life on earth. This huge increase in the destructive power of our weapons surely merits an increase in our response to the threat of war. Is this just a political problem, or is there a moral dimension to our considerations?

“War is not an independent phenomenon, but the continuation of politics by different means.” - Carl von Clausewitz 1792-1832

Clausewitz was an early nineteenth century Prussian general whose rational thinking and writing about war remains taught in military colleges today.



In groups or pairs discuss the following:

- Can war be avoided by using politics alone?
- Is Clausewitz correct that resorting to war is ‘normal’ - just a regular mechanism for settling disputes between states?

These are several techniques that can be used to prevent war:

<u>Process</u>	<u>Description</u>
Diplomacy	Diplomacy has been practised throughout history; negotiation is better than fighting.
Treaties	Legally binding agreements that exclude war
Sanctions	Preventing normal trading relations to change a country’s policy has a long history.
Pacifism	The refusal to bear arms for moral or religious reasons.
Deterrence	Threatening to destroy anyone who attacks us.

Diplomacy is the primary alternative to war. Diplomacy means resolving issues between nations through dialogue and negotiation, rather than violence and force. The job of a diplomat is to represent the interests of their nation in international negotiations, and to work with other diplomats to make agreements based on compromises between their nations.

This method mirrors the way nations ask their citizens to behave in their daily lives - resolving problems through talking to the person and making compromises, rather than using violence to get what we want. We can all think of examples from our own lives where we have had to be diplomatic.

In times of peace, diplomats support and maintain friendly relationships between nations, and may be involved in the positive reinforcement of these relationships through humanitarian aid or trade deals. This makes them well placed to anticipate any conflicts. When conflicts arise, diplomacy plays an important part in trying to prevent these conflicts from escalating into armed combat.

Challenge

Alternatives to War (contd.)

In times when conflict is escalating, diplomats may turn to *coercive diplomacy* to get what they want. This means they use negative reinforcement instead, such as the threat of sanctions, or the threat to withdraw humanitarian aid.

- Can you think of examples of how you resolve differences with other people?

Treaties between countries are as old as countries themselves. They have prevented wars, and started them – Germany's Kaiser complained that Britain declared war in 1914 over "a scrap of paper" (the one guaranteeing Belgium's borders we signed in 1839). There is a new dimension to international treaties. Rather than bilateral the United Nations seeks to introduce treaties, mediate for their acceptance, and condemn those who break them. Enforcement of treaties is problematic. If a contract between two companies is in dispute, a country's legal system provides a remedy. When a treaty is broken that involves states there is no universally accepted system for adjudication and enforcement. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has a very active adjudication and enforcement agency, and even it is unable to enforce all of its judgements.

Sanctions have played important roles throughout history. Sanctions often consist of restrictions on trade and travel between countries. In practice this often means that the civilian population suffer the consequences and experience shortages of necessities for normal living.

The sanctions the USA imposed on Iraq in the 1990s, led to the deaths of approximately 500,000 Iraqi children from hunger and disease. Medicines for childhood illnesses could not be imported. In 1996 Madeleine Albright, then USA ambassador to the United Nations, appeared on television and was asked the following question: "*We have heard that half a million children have died.. more children than died in Hiroshima... is the price worth it?*". Albright replied "*I think this is a very hard choice, but the price — we think the price is worth it.*"

Pacifism may be based on **moral** principles (a deontological view) or **pragmatism** (a consequentialist view). Some pacifists follow principles of nonviolence, believing that nonviolent action is morally superior and most effective. Some pacifists however will allow violence in cases of self-defence, or defence of others.

Since World War 2, Japan has been legally committed to pacifism. However this may change as some of its politicians want to end this constitutional requirement

Conscientious objectors create problems for regimes who want to wage war. They refuse to serve in the military and are protected to some extent by Article 18 of the 1976 United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which enshrines rights to "freedom of thought, conscience and religion".

Deterrence – since atomic bombs were dropped by the USA on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the word deterrence has often been used to refer to a country's ability to terrorise and threaten annihilation of their enemies with nuclear weapons.

Since 1945 nuclear weapons have not been used in wars. This absence of use has been claimed to justify their retention – suggesting they "keep the peace", although some nuclear armed states have still fought conventional wars with each other.

The terms "deterrent" and nuclear "capability" are examples of language used to conceal the reality of an outrageous act – weapons of mass destruction for large scale annihilation of human life.

- Why do you think politicians choose to use more neutral terms to describe bombs?

Challenge

Alternatives to War (contd.)

The production of nuclear weapons and their maintenance supports a large industry. Many people make individual moral and ethical decisions by taking jobs with titles such as “structural engineer”.

- Would they make the same decision if their job title accurately reflected the end result of their work – creating weapons which threaten civilians with a violent death and the world with an environmental catastrophe?

During a parliamentary debate on 20th January 2015 on the renewal of the Trident nuclear weapons system, a minority of MPs voted against renewing Trident, but many who expressed a desire to abolish nuclear weapons still voted for Trident’s renewal. They put forward a case for employment and a suggestion that nuclear weapons ‘keep us safe’ as their rationale.

Few MPs mentioned morality, ethics or the potential degradation of human values that the UK Government is prepared to cause in creating employment by making weapons of mass destruction which do not discriminate between combatants and civilians.

On the 3rd of May 2019, the Dean of Westminster Abbey in London led a service celebrating 50 years of ‘continuous at sea deterrence’, saying:

“For the past fifty years, Royal Navy submariners have patrolled the oceans and seas of our world, sometimes for many months at a time, burdened with a force able to engender a greater destructive power than has ever been seen on earth. Today we thank God that this continuous at sea deterrence, part of a balancing of forces between the most powerful nations on earth, has had the effect of maintaining peace and security between the nations. We pray that the Royal Navy may never be required to deploy these terrible forces in war and that they may continue to deter their use by others”

This led to objections from other religious figures to what was described as a ‘sanctification of terror’ – noting the dignity accorded, by the Dean and government, to those involved in the nuclear weapons production, and those who carry the weapons and make them ready to fire at their targets – which include cities full of non-combatant civilians.

In groups or pairs discuss the following questions:

- Are individuals involved in the production of weapons morally responsible for their purpose and potential use?
- Are our individual moral responses to nuclear weapons affected by the language used to describe their purpose – i.e. as ‘peace keeping’ rather than ‘war mongering’?
- Do religious figures have a moral responsibility to consider the non-combatant victims in the countries targeted by our weapons?

Ikeda Daisaku, the president of SGI (a Buddhist organisation) offered an alternative solution to the “terror” of nuclear weapons:

“If we are to put the era of nuclear weapons behind us, we must struggle against the real “enemy “ that is we must confront is the ways of thinking that justify nuclear weapons; the readiness to annihilate others when they are seen as a threat or as a hindrance to the realisation of our objectives “