The Morality of the Nuclear Deterrent - how to decide for yourself Everyone in the world is threatened by the existence of nuclear weapons. Has anyone the right to wield such destructive power? Everyone has a right to ask this question, and those who live in countries possessing nuclear weapons have a duty to answer it. It has to be a personal moral decision, because if you accept nuclear weapons (NW) for your defence, then morally you hold them in your own hands. This chart is designed to help you decide, and to make national decision makers more accountable. Just follow the chart, answering the questions for yourself; it's easier than it looks but the decisions can be hard 1 You have accepted the May a May a state, acting in self-Yes You shall not kill. Is it ever permitted to kill May a state, acting in self defence, standard by which nation-state kill defence, kill civilians as the in self defence? kill civilians through a deliberate policy? mass bombing of cities in self defence? Yes sometimes result of a military action? Start during World War 2 was here justified. No never No Can NW be an effective deterrent if the intended Is it acceptable use is limited to ensuring defeat for aggressors for a state to be May a state (e.g. by targetting of military infrastructure)? willing to use a NW intentionally kill 9 as a weapon of You may be a pacifist, 16/5/10 civilians using Yes mass destruction but please continue with NW deployed as to deter a other questions which are a deterrent? Are you prepared to take an action that inevitably conventional still relevant to your case. results in destruction of some innocent lives? attack? No Yes 47 Yes 24 Yes Key Is it acceptable for a state merely to possess nuclear weapons You must estimate the Are you certain as a means of keeping the peace? loss of life that would result that your state could not 12 Moral questions from this action in a practical become an aggressor Yes war situation, including the during the lifetime of response of your forces to an a long-term nuclear No Yes escalating conflict. defence policy? Other Is it acceptable for a state to be willing to Can you accept questions use NW if it is so attacked, believing that this 11 responsibility for this? therefore is very unlikely to happen? No Yes Yes Comments You believe that 14 your state has some CONDITIONS FOR DETERRENCE intrinsic stability or The potential aggressor must believe that the capability and moral superiority that Ref. to notes the will to retaliate will survive a nuclear attack. He must is lacked by potential believe that individual members of the defending forces are enemies sufficiently disciplined that they would inflict an appalling 25 death on millions of innocent people, even after it would serve no useful purpose, deterrence having failed. 26 As holders of NW, No could you deny other states the right to seek 17 16 15 security through NW? Are they Is it acceptable for a state to thus threaten Are these conditions attainable in Yes to use NW, while not intending to? morally acceptable? No Yes practice? 27 28 Yes No So is it likely that Yes Will this moral censure some more will Could it be done without also be likely to prevent Is the possession and want to do so? deceiving a large proportion them from doing so? deployment of NW, such of the population? that the perceived threat or the No fear generated by uncertainty Yes Yes No is an effective deterrent, 19 a morally acceptable Is this morally means of defence? acceptable? Are you very Is there any other Yes Is escalation of the Yes No optimistic, or have long-term effective destructive capability of the you handed over prevention? nuclear states a most likely your conscience to consequence of the your government? No "balance of terror" ? 23 Do you need to Yes No re-examine the case for Could a nuclear deterrent be an effective retaining a deterrent in Is it therefore likely defence against non-national groups using NW? that eventually the Yes these circumstances? policy of deterrence 22 will lead to a nuclear No Yes war? 31 Does the risk of nuclear war No Yes imply a risk of serious You have renounced the principle of the nuclear deterrent as being immoral. consequences for neighbouring You must therefore put your vote and your best efforts of persuasion behind non-combatant states or even its abolition, particularly where it is deployed on your behalf or in for the the rest of humanity? circumstances controlled by your government. However: Have you the right to achieve Yes No your own security by endangering No the rest of Would the unconditional abandonment humanity? of the nuclear deterrent by your country So do you need to adjust be more likely or less likely to lead to the your moral standpoint? more likely Yes use of nuclear weapons in the long term? Less likely In the face of so much real need in the world can you justify securing your defence through Would the abandonment of the So are you prepared to vast expenditure on the nuclear deterrent? nuclear deterrent mean that your 34 compromise your moral country might be subjugated by standpoint? 39 Yes others with nuclear weapons? 38 No Yes You have accepted nuclear weapons for your defence, and therefore also their development, maintenance and deployment. Would conventional warfare between So do you need to adjust To be involved in this process, through military service, a civilian nation states become more likely your moral standpoint? occupation or merely by paying your taxes, would not be without the nuclear deterrent. inconsistent with the position you have taken. However, you 41 40 already bear responsibility to the extent that your decisions could allow use of the weapons in the circumstances and conditions that you have accepted in the above questions. You may support 45 unilateral nuclear disarmament. 42 Your answers so far, indicate that in the long term you cannot support a nuclear defence policy. If nuclear 43 weapons are deployed by your country, you must decide You should now examine the morality of practical modes of deployment, e.g. a preventive strike capability - is this an You must now decide what steps are open to you what course you could support in changing the policy, to bring about the abolition of nuclear weapons. weighing the risks of various routes to disarmament inevitable development of a deterrent policy? 44

The purpose of this document is to enable a broadly based democratic response to a very complex problem. By limiting the scope to <u>morality</u> of <u>deterrence</u> using <u>nuclear weapons</u> it becomes feasible to present a basic analysis on one sheet. Notes overleaf give additional background. Anyone who is not happy with the questions or the logic can amend the chart as part of their own individual response. Those who do so may wish to subject their changes or enhancements to the scrutiny of others and thereby make a contribution to the general debate.

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