

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE IN THE REFLECTIONS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

Lóránd UJHÁZI

Senior Research Fellow (NUPS, Faculty of Military Science and Officer Training)

Introduction

The Catholic Church has always rejected the use of nuclear weapons because of their high destructive power and the difficulties in defending non-combatants.¹ Correspondingly, the Church Magisterium consistently has expressed its manifest support for nuclear disarmament. However, in connection with nuclear deterrence, that is, owning nuclear weapons to withhold others from attack, papal utterances expressed different points of view. The radical turn started with Pope John Paul II's speech in the UN, in 1982. In his speech, the Pope considered it morally acceptable to possess nuclear weapons temporarily and for nuclear deterrence purposes only. Pope Francis radically turned away from this point of view, and in many forums he expressed that the mere possession of nuclear weapon was a sin. It is absurd and morally not permissible. According to Drew Christiansen, who is a distinguished expert of the topic, it is natural that the church magisterium – in the light of the changed circumstances – reassesses the same moral dilemma. Nevertheless, until the present day John Paul II's standpoint gives a basis for Catholic security politicians and bishops to express different views on possessing nuclear weapons and the question of nuclear deterrence.²

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¹ UJHÁZI, Lóránd: Az „igazságos háború” tan elemeinek tovább élése a jelenkori fegyveres konfliktusoknál. In: GÖCZE, István (szerk.): *Az igazságos háború elvétől az igazságos békéig*. Budapest, Dialóg Campus Kiadó, 2017. 21–39.

² Drew CHRISTIANSEN: The Church Says ‘No’ to Nuclear Weapons Pastoral and moral implications. *La Civiltà Cattolica*, (2017) English Edition. 3.

In this study I am showing the way that has been scoured by the Catholic Church from the WWII until the present day in connection with its teaching from possessing and using nuclear weapons to nuclear deterrence. Beside the reflections of the magisterium, I am referring to local churches that express their views comprehensively – as they are directly affected – about the questions of nuclear weapons. I am referring to security political events only if they are essential to understand the changes inside the church.

1. The standpoint of the Catholic Church about nuclear weapons until Pope John Paul II's speech in the UN

Regarding the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, it became clear that there was no adequately developed international legal guarantee to check neither nuclear technology nor the spread of nuclear weapons.³ The war, as a question affecting the society – including the moral dilemmas of using the most modern weapons, has regularly been evaluated by the Catholic Church during its history in the light of Catholic teaching.⁴ By the 1960s a comprehensive magisterial standpoint was needed regarding new military technology and nuclear weapons. A declaration that considered both the traditional Christian principles of a Just War and the developing international and humanitarian laws had to be made. Shorter declarations had already been made during Pope Pius XII's papacy. Before the first A-bomb was dropped, in 1943 the Pope already drew attention to the danger of using nuclear energy for military goals. In his 1954 Easter message, the Pope called for the effective withdrawal and abolition of nuclear weapons regarding their destructive effects. He also referred to the fact that the deployment of these weapons caused immeasurable human suffering, body deformity and uninhabitable lands. What is more, the expensive arms race reinforced social injustice.⁵ However, Pope Pius XII's warnings did not mean the comprehensive evaluation of nuclear technology.

Pope John XXIII's, the spiritual father of the Second Vatican Council, last encyclical (*Pacem in Terris*) is the first comprehensive papal utterances regarding nuclear weapons. Not only does he reflect to the deployment of nuclear weapons, but – shortly – he mentions the theory of deterrence. In this encyclical the basic principles of the Second Vatican Council – launched by him, but finished by his successor, Pope Paul VI – can be seen clearly: 1; in order to promote world peace widespread cooperation is needed between the church and state and international organizations.⁶ 2; the implementation – or forming – of the social teaching of the church should be considered not only a

³ RESPERGER, István: A „diadal” és egyéb módszerek alkalmazása a nemzeti válságkezelési feladatok megoldásánál. *Hadtudományi Szemle*, vol. 5., no. 2 (2012) 141–165.; Az atomsorompó-szerződés. *Grotius*, <http://bit.ly/342AOP1>

⁴ ERDŐ, Péter: Az íjászok és hajtógép-kezelők büntetése: Adalékok a kánonjogi esetmegoldás módszeréhez a kései középkorban. *Magyar Sion*, vol. 2. (2008) 23–58.; Lóránd UJHÁZI: Further Ethical Challenges in Military Science from the Perspective of the Catholic Church: Reflection on the Use of Drones. *Academic and Applied Research in Military and Public Management Science*, vol. 16., no. 2. (2017) 17–32.

⁵ Holy See Mission: The Holy See on the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons. <http://bit.ly/2CZgK4t>

⁶ This concept was highlighted frequently by Second Vatican Council.

clerical but a matter of lay faithful.⁷ Regarding nuclear weapons, these general principles mean that the church should hold a dialogue with international organizations and nuclear powers. To evaluate the question genuinely, not only theological, military and technological knowledge is needed, but a set of criteria – developed along this knowledge.⁸ With regard to military, political and technological knowledge, inside the church this knowledge is held by the lay faithful. So while the ecclesiastical hierarchy can point at the moral problems of nuclear weapons, the lay faithful can point at the human and ecological problems of these weapons genuinely.⁹ So it is evident that this field of cooperation between the hierarchy and the lay faithful has become a prominent area of the cooperation since the Second Vatican Council.

The encyclical, *Pacem in terris* deals with arms race¹⁰ and with the effort to possess nuclear weapons. Pope John XXIII saw clearly that some nations explained the increase of military alert that “peace cannot be assured except on the basis of an equal balance of armaments”, and therefore they were trying to produce weapons with similar destructive power, which was true for nuclear weapons as well.¹¹ Pope John XXIII pointed out that arms race had to be stopped in the name of “justice, common sense and human dignity”. Furthermore, total nuclear disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons had to be reached gradually. With this he established the basis for the teaching of the church regarding nuclear weapons: he disapproved the production, the development of nuclear weapons, the experiments, the social injustice that entailed arms race, and the deployment of these weapons. With regard to the subsequently most controversial area, the possession of nuclear weapons for deterrence, Pope John XXIII dealt with it marginally. In his encyclical, he admitted that expensive arms race was generated by fear, and nations – as they stated – did not do it because they wanted to attack others, but they wanted to discourage a potential enemy from an attack.¹² Apart from this short section, he did not speak about deterrence.

The Second Vatican Council was convened by Pope John XXIII, and – until his death in 1963 – he was actively engaged in the processes. It is understandable that in the question of nuclear weapons number of parallels can be found between the mentioned encyclical and the teaching of the Council. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, of 1965 basically follows the viewpoint of

⁷ See document of Apostolicam actuositatem about lay apostolate. Alvaro DEL PORTILLO: *Laici e fedeli nella Chiesa*. Milano, Giuffrè, 1999.

⁸ PADÁNYI, József: A hadtudomány művelésének keretei a Nemzeti Közszolgálati Egyetemen. *Hadtudomány: a Magyar Hadtudományi Társaság Folyóirata*, vol. 26., no. 1–2. (2016) 112–114.

⁹ BOTOS, Katalin: A jó pápa. *Magyar Szemle*, vol. 11–12. (2013) 182–186.

¹⁰ “On the other hand, We are deeply distressed to see the enormous stocks of armaments that have been, and continue to be, manufactured in the economically more developed countries. This policy is involving a vast outlay of intellectual and material resources, with the result that the people of these countries are saddled with a great burden, while other countries lack the help they need for their economic and social development.” POPE JOHN XXIII: *Pacem in terris* Enc.11/03/1963. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol., 55. no. 3. (1963) 257–304.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

the encyclical. The constitution finds the use of nuclear weapons incompatible with the elements of a conventional just war doctrine. (GS 80) Besides, the Council also takes a position on the question of deterrence. According to paragraph 81, “scientific weapons are not amassed solely for use in war”. As the Council document reinforces, nations think that defensive strength depends on their “capacity for immediate retaliation”. Therefore, the accumulation of arms increases, which “serves, in a way heretofore unknown, as deterrent to possible enemy attack”. They think the philosophy of deterrence is the most effective way by which peace can be maintained between nations at the present time. (GS 81) The Council document declares its opinion on nuclear deterrence clearly, but it does not conduct a detailed analysis. All in all, it draws a general conclusion when saying “deterrence [...] arms race in which an already considerable number of countries are engaged is not a safe way to preserve a steady peace”. Furthermore, neither “the so-called balance” nor “authentic peace” results from this race. (GS 81) The council leaves no doubt that arms race does not eliminate the real causes of war, and “extravagant sums are being spent for the furnishing of ever new weapons”, while social injustice is not being remedied: “the arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which ensnares the poor to an intolerable degree.” (GS 81)¹³

The documents of the Second Vatican Council were issued with the authority of Pope Paul VI's; therefore they can be considered as the Pope's own personal standpoint. The Pope attempted to reinforce the concept of the Council in each forum. In his letter to the leaders of the nuclear powers, he promoted the abolition of nuclear arms testing.¹⁴ In his message to the UN assembly of 1968¹⁵, which was the first to discuss disarmament, he promoted the initiatives that were heading towards total nuclear disarmament, and to give all peoples access to resources of nuclear energy for their peaceful use. (6/a)¹⁶ He condemned arms race and its consequence, growing social injustice. (7)¹⁷ Furthermore,

¹³ „But even though the “balance of terror” has been able to avoid the worst and may do so for some time more, to think that the arms race can thus go on indefinitely, without causing a catastrophe, would be a tragic illusion.” PAUL VI: Message. 4. IV. 1968. *L'Osservatore Romano*, vol. 24., no. 12. (1968) 2–3.

¹⁴ PAUL VI: Nuntius telegraphicus. 05/08/1963. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 55. (1963) 760.

¹⁵ PAUL VI: Messaggio al presidente e ai delegati delle nazioni unite riuniti in assemblea plenaria a New York, *L'Osservatore Romano*, vol. 24., no. 12. (1968) 2–3.

¹⁶ Nuclear weapons certainly have first place: they are the most fearsome menace with which mankind is burdened. We appreciate very much the initiatives that have already been taken in this area, but we must encourage all countries, particularly those which have the chief responsibility for it, to continue and to develop these initiatives, with the final goal of completely eliminating the atomic arsenal. At the same time means must be found for giving all peoples access to the immense resources of nuclear energy for their peaceful use.” PAUL VI: Message. 4. IV. 1968. *L'Osservatore Romano*, vol. 24., no. 12. (1968) 2–3.

¹⁷ Pope refers to inequity coming from war race in his encyclical of *Populorum progressio* in 1967. „Countless millions are starving, countless families are destitute, countless men are steeped in ignorance; countless people need schools, hospitals, and homes worthy of the name. In such circumstances, we cannot tolerate public and private expenditures of a wasteful nature; we cannot but condemn lavish displays of wealth by nations or individuals; we cannot approve a debilitating arms race. It is Our solemn duty to speak out against them. If only world leaders would listen to Us, before it is too late!” PAUL VI: *Enc. Populorum progressio*. 26/03/1967. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 59., no. 2. (1967) 283.

he urged international partnership, and ensured everybody that the Holy See, as a sovereign body of international law, would take part in this peacebuilding process.⁽⁸⁾

As far as the diplomatic steps of these years concerned: the Holy See was a member of Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) since 1971, and is obviously considered to be a state without nuclear weapons.

The more radical catholic rejection concerning nuclear weapons was kept alive until Pope John Paul II's speech in the 1982 UN assembly.

2. Pope John Paul II: The moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence

The catholic evaluation of nuclear deterrence took a new turn with Pope John Paul II's speech in the UN assembly.¹⁸ The Pope was realistic when he saw that there had been little progress concerning nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, the capacity of the weapon market, the foundation of new institutions, the implementation of new technologies and the media exposure around researches all referred to the fact that situation had become worse. Partly, this reality was the starting point of his 1982 UN speech, in which he expressed 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." (par. 8) Pope John Paul II was aware that the existence of nuclear weapons was morally questionable. It is confirmed by the fact that a few months before, during his visit to England, he spoke about public dangers which nuclear weapons represented. He said that those were weapons that could not be the tools of solving conflicts between peoples, as they were able to destroy the whole mankind.¹⁹ In his message on International Day of Peace, 1986 he pointed at the responsibility of the leaders of nuclear powers: "Weapons of mass destruction – biological, chemical and nuclear – represent extreme threat; those who possess them have special responsibility before God and the whole mankind."²⁰ He considered the possession of nuclear arsenal based on deterrence to be temporary, which really seemed to be the only way to later total disarmament then. Otherwise, he referred to this in his speech in the UN: "a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament". Mathias Nebel and Giovanni Giudetti highlighted some contradictions of his message in the UN.²¹ Considering the whole text, the Pope seems to have supported those views which suggested that the only way to peace was the continuous and later total nuclear disarmament. Paragraph 8, the moral acceptability of the possession of nuclear weapons as means of deterrence, was included in the text as a gesture for those who thought that the way to preserving

¹⁸ JOHN PAUL II: Message to the General Assembly of the United Nations. 07/06/1982. *L'osservatore romano, Weekly Edition in English*, 1982/25. 3.

¹⁹ JOHN PAUL II: Homily of Holy Mass of Pentecost. <http://bit.ly/2Xrrou6>

²⁰ JOHN PAUL II: Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace 1986. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 78., no. 3. (1986) 280.

²¹ Mathias NEBEL– Giovanni GIUDETTI: Introduction to Texts of the Catholic Church Regarding Nuclear Deterrence. In: THE CARITAS IN VERITATE FOUNDATION (ed.): *Nuclear Deterrence. With a Selection of Recent Texts from the Church's Engagement Regarding the Question of Nuclear Deterrence*. The Caritas in Veritate Foundation, 2015. 37.

peace would be detention and deterrence. At the same time, the Pope's statement later determined certain bishops' views on the possession of nuclear weapons. Building upon these papal commitments, they rejected (and still reject today) "nuclear pacifism". They thought till there was no chance for total nuclear disarmament, the possession of these weapons was, as the Pope said, "morally admissible", as far as the criteria, expressed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1983, came true: namely, 1; they are used only for deterrence 2; the countries that possess nuclear weapons do not try to reach nuclear supremacy 3; and the possession of these weapons is a necessary stage towards total disarmament.

3. The period after the Cold War

After the Cold War Catholic theologians and ecclesiastical leaders could rightly ask how long the teaching on the moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence should be maintained. From the papal and Holy See declarations of the 1990s, some shifts could be seen towards total nuclear disarmament and the rejection of the possession of nuclear weapons as means of deterrence. Indeed, accepting the possession of nuclear weapons as means of deterrence became the barrier of the primary goal – total disarmament. This is highlighted by the Caritas in Veritate Foundation in its summary on nuclear deterrence, published in 2015.²² The Pope decided on the moral, temporary acceptance of nuclear deterrence because of the cold war situation in 1982. However, he thought all these to be temporary, after the Cold War still many people referred to him when they spoke about the moral justification of possessing nuclear weapons. In his third social encyclical *Centesimus annus* (issued in 1991), Pope John Paul II again pointed at the dangers, often stated by his ancestors, that nuclear weapons meant, and which "the whole world was oppressed by". Besides, concerning arms race, he stated that "we must repudiate the logic which leads to it: the idea that the effort to destroy the enemy, confrontation and war itself are factors of progress and historical advancement."²³ He pointed out that even though the elimination of some nuclear weapons was reached, the existence and the conflict of the block still remained, which was still determining factor, with its reality and disturbing facts, of the world situation.

During John Paul II's papacy, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) was issued in 1992. Under the order "do not kill", the Decalogue dedicates a separate subsection to avoiding a war. However, nuclear weapons are mentioned once expressly, but from the other basic paradigms we can draw conclusions in connection with nuclear weapons. Concerning just war and self-defence, "The strict conditions for legitimate defence by military force require rigorous consideration. [...] the use of arms must

²² „Therefore deterrence no longer functions as an instrument that allows for disarmament; rather it has become an obstacle toward achieving that goal.” THE CARITAS IN VERITATE FOUNDATION: Nuclear Deterrence. An Ethical Perspective. The Caritas in Veritate Foundation Working Papers. With a selection of recent texts from the Church's engagement regarding the question of nuclear deterrence. The Caritas in Veritate Foundation, 2015.

²³ JOHN PAUL II: Enc. *Centesimus annus*. 01. V. 1991. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Vol. 83., no. 18. (1991) 816.

not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.” (CCC 2309) Referring to the Council principles (GS 8): “The Church and human reason both assert the permanent validity of the moral law during armed conflict. The mere fact that war has regrettably broken out does not mean that everything becomes licit between the warring parties.” (CCC 2312) As for nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction: “Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation. A danger of modern warfare is that it provides the opportunity to those who possess modern scientific weapons especially atomic, biological, or chemical weapons – to commit such crimes.” (CCC 2314) Referring to using A-weapons, the text says that it is “is a crime against God and man”. So, the 1992 Catechism partly repeats the conventional view in connection with using A-weapons, on the other hand, we can feel that the text is more critical to deterrence and the possession nuclear weapons. The later standpoint appeared more powerfully in 1996, when the Holy See signed and then ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). A year later Renato Martino, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, said: “Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the 21st century.”²⁴ It was Pope John Paul II, who assigned the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace to prepare the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. The compendium already says about nuclear deterrence that it should be changed with real disarmament measures based on dialogue and multilateral negotiations (508).²⁵

Under Benedict XVI’s papacy (2005–2013), it became more appreciable that changes could be foreseen in the moral assessment of the possession of nuclear weapons as means of deterrence. The Pope, following the current rhetoric, stated several times that the spread of nuclear weapons should be prevented, and a shift towards total nuclear disarmament should be made. Until total disarmament took place, nuclear-free zones should be established.²⁶ For the celebration of the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2006, he used the expression “progressive disarmament” to promote the need of disarmament. He meant the process with which all benevolent people were activated so that nuclear disarmament could happen.²⁷ The Pope saw that it was his moral duty to argue for disarmament, as “the prevention of widespread arms race.” He called on “the authorities” to continue the disarmament process and the negotiations which targeted the coordinated and progressive destruction of existing nuclear weapons with more positive determination. He assumed that after the Cold War not only did the arms race

²⁴ Eileen EGAN: *Peace be with You: Justified Warfare or the Way of Nonviolence*. Eugene, Wipf and Stock, 2004. 128.

²⁵ PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE: *Compendium of the catechism of the Catholic Church*. <http://bit.ly/2qtJBep>

²⁶ “I encourage the initiatives aimed at progressive disarmament and the creation of zones free from nuclear arms in the prospect of their complete elimination from the planet.” Thomas REESE: *Vatican Questions Nuclear Deterrence*. <http://bit.ly/2rYsx0E>

²⁷ Message of his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace. <http://bit.ly/2qtJjUR>

not die down, but more and more – also developing – countries became involved, and more and more countries wanted to possess nuclear weapons. Pope Benedict XVI, as Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council, approached deterrence and arms race from the side of social justice. Certain countries spend significant part of their GDP on armament, and developed countries make significant profit from selling weapons. It is obvious that, according to the social doctrines of the Church, it is remarkable injustice to the poor, as this sum of money – now spent on armament – could be spent on improving their life-situation. Pope Benedict XVI's policy is a change, compared to the viewpoint of Pope John Paul II's during the Cold War, but the resolution against the mere possession of nuclear weapons did not appear as distinctly as in the current Pope's communication.²⁸

4. Pope Francis: “the very possession of nuclear weapons, even for purposes of deterrence, is morally problematic”

Pope Francis vehemently opposed to the existence of nuclear weapons.²⁹ Several times he called the attention of state and non-state institutions that the Catholic Church still stood for nuclear disarmament. The mere existence of nuclear weapons endangered peaceful coexistence, and it gave the false impression of security.³⁰ He warned us in Norway, 2013; in Mexico, February 2014 and in Vienna, December 2014. The later was the most significant. On the occasion of ‘Vienna meeting’, the pope sent a message to Sebastian Kurz, the chairman of the conference, which implied that the goal of the Holy See was to abolish nuclear weapons totally. Pope Francis finally turned his back on the view which maintained – referring to Pope John Paul II – that nuclear deterrence was morally acceptable temporarily.³¹ On the occasion of Vienna Conference, the Holy See diplomacy issued a document, Nuclear Weapons: Time for Abolition, on December 8, 2014. However, the title itself tells a lot about the objectives, the text itself is not coherent regarding the possession of nuclear weapons as means of deterrence. First, the document expresses a subdued view: „The very possession of nuclear weapons, even for purposes of deterrence, is morally problematic.” Later it sounds more drastic, and says “Now is the time to affirm not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the

²⁸ Celestino MIGLIORE: Statement Intervention by the Holy See At the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties To the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear weapons (NPT). *L'osservatore Romano*, 05/ November /2005. 2.

²⁹ Emily WELTY: The Theological Landscape of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty: the Catholic Church, the World Council of Churches and the Bomb. *Global Policy*, vol. 7., no. 3. (2016) 396–404.

³⁰ POPE FRANCIS: The Possession of Nuclear Weapons Should be Firmly Condemned. *Catholic Herald*, <http://bit.ly/2QAabgG>

³¹ POPE FRANCIS: Message of his Holiness Pope Francis on the Occasion of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons „Nuclear Deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among peoples and states.”

immorality of their possession, thereby clearing the road to nuclear abolition.”³² The document highlights that the standpoint of the Holy See changed, because the moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence during the Cold War was such a politically realistic and a strategic point of view that led to total nuclear disarmament in the long run.³³

Pope Francis reinforced the principle of radical rejection in his peace message on January 1, 2017, in which he said “Hence, I plead for disarmament and for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons: nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutual assured destruction are incapable of grounding such an ethics”³⁴ He expressed the same in 2017, in the International Symposium “Prospects for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament”.³⁵ In this case, he rejected the possession and the use of nuclear weapons, any intention for deterrence due to the discipline of just war and international humanitarian rights.³⁶ In the encyclical, *Laudato si*, the Pope characterised nuclear weapons as a danger both to mankind and the created world.³⁷

Regarding the rejection of nuclear weapons, the Pope and the Holy See did not overlook that in the current situation those weapons might fall into the hands of non-state bodies. Furthermore, the social problem which had always been stressed by the Holy See still existed: arms race and the steps towards the modernization of the nuclear arsenal deepened social injustice.³⁸ It was naïve, says the Pope, to think that peace could be preserved through the possession of nuclear weapons, and neither through the elimination of poverty nor the development of health care, education and solidarity. He highlighted that nuclear weapons served fear, and they meant danger to the opposing parties, as well as to the whole mankind. The idea of nuclear ‘deterrence’ could not be maintained anymore. According to Catholic moral theology, it is immoral to threaten that which it is immoral to do. From this point of view, the moral foundation of nuclear deterrence was always contradictory.³⁹

³² Paul LANSU: A world without nuclear weapons is possible – The Holy See takes on a leading role in abolishing nuclear weapons. <http://bit.ly/2KDHhZo> _

³³ Gregory M. REICHBERG: The Morality of Nuclear Deterrence. A Reassessment. In: THE CARITAS IN VERITATE FOUNDATION (ed.): *Nuclear Deterrence. With a Selection of Recent Texts from the Church's Engagement Regarding the Question of Nuclear Deterrence*, The Caritas in Veritate Foundation, 2015. 10. The author refuses existence of any nuclear weapons from perspective and doctrine of Catholic Church and natural law furthermore from concept of classic just war theory. For the legal point of views of natural law see: FRIVALDSZKY, János: Egy ma vállalható természetjogi elmélet körvonalai. *Natura Iuris*, 2002. 59–72.

³⁴ POPE FRANCIS: Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Celebration of the Fiftieth World Day of Peace. <http://bit.ly/2XuAsly>

³⁵ POPE FRANCIS: Address of his Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the International Symposium “Prospects for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament”. <http://bit.ly/2O3ZyBj>

³⁶ Eli McCARTHY: Nuclear Weapons: Built on Fear, So Address the Fear. <http://bit.ly/2NXUxKe>

³⁷ POPE FRANCIS: Enc. *Laudato si*. 24. V. 2015. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol., 107. no. 9. (2015) 888–889.

³⁸ Nobuo HAYASHI: On the Ethics of Nuclear Weapons, Framing a Political Consensus on the Unacceptability of Nuclear Weapons. *ILPI-Unid ir NPT Review Conference Series*, no. 2. (2015) 2–3.

³⁹ Gerard POWERS: From Nuclear Deterrence to Disarmament: Evolving Catholic Perspectives. *Arms Control Association*, May 2015. <http://bit.ly/34dtu3a>

As the emphasis of the Holy See defence policy is always determined by the Pope, the Holy See always talks according to the Pope's intention in international forums. The Holy See has permanent representation in International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). These forums give the possibility for the Holy See to express its opinion. Bernardito Auza, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, makes regular statements about the nuclear policy of the Holy See – in the of papal guidelines – in the UN.⁴⁰ Monsignor Antoine Camilleri, Under-Secretary for Relations with States, reinforcing the papal statements, said „The mere existence of these weapons is absurd and that arguments in support of their use are an affront against the dignity of all human life.”⁴¹ Paul Richard Gallagher, bishop – the Secretary for Relations with States within the Holy See's Secretariat of State, warned of the harmful effect of nuclear tests.⁴² The Holy See signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017.⁴³

Beside its shorter statements, the diplomatic body issued more comprehensive professional works, and organised professional conferences as well. The Caritas in Veritate Foundation, in its 2015 publication, already summarized why the moral support of deterrence could not be maintained.⁴⁴ The task of the foundation is to provide sufficient professional work to delegations of the Holy See in issues that are analysed by the UN as well.⁴⁵ The foundation accomplished this task with the comprehensive analysis of nuclear deterrence. According to the document, the position – i.e. the possession, and not their direct use, of nuclear weapons as means of deterrence is morally acceptable – cannot be maintained. The reasons are: (a) when these weapons are used, the principle of proportionality cannot be sustained. The damage is much more massive than the military benefit that can be gained. (b) Those (international) parties that do not fear death and devastating blow become vulnerable. (c) These weapons maintain the possibility of the outbreak of a total war.

In 2016, the Holy See organized a great conference on nuclear weapons in Vatican. The organizer of the conference was the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, established with *motu proprio Humanam progressionem*⁴⁶ on August 31, 2016. The Pope established this new Holy See office so that it could take a position in human rights issues.⁴⁷ Nuclear weapons and the question of deterrence are strongly tied to the mission of the new dicastery. The new office was formed with merging four

⁴⁰ Bernardito AUZA: General and Complete Disarmament. <http://bit.ly/2rYHyQ6>

⁴¹ Antoine CAMILLERI: Address to the 58th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Vienna, September 22, 2014.

⁴² Holy See: Nuclear weapons harmful to health, the environment, poverty. <http://bit.ly/2CV3z4j>

⁴³ Signing and ratification by the Holy See, also on behalf of Vatican City State, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, 21. IX. 2017. <http://bit.ly/341otut>

⁴⁴ THE CARITAS IN VERITATE FOUNDATION op. cit. 6.

⁴⁵ CARITAS IN VERITATE FOUNDATION: Activities. <http://www.fciv.org/activities>.

⁴⁶ POPE FRANCIS: Motu proprio. Humanam progressionem 17. VII. 2016. <http://bit.ly/2rWddl3>

⁴⁷ POPE FRANCIS: Hogyan folyik a római kúriai reformja. <http://bit.ly/2Xsc5RX>

Pontifical Councils, out of which the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace dealt with the question of war and peace, especially with disarmament and the problems of modern and nuclear weapons. The conference was attended by 11 Noble Peace laureates, high-ranking officials of the UN and NATO, diplomats and experts on nuclear weapons and disarmament. Besides, representatives of civil organizations and national episcopal conferences also took part. In addition to numerous speeches, Masako Wada, the last survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, also gave a talk. The Pope commented on Wada's speech being a prophetic voice, as his words were a warning for the next generations. Furthermore, he added that he was pessimistic regarding the world being nuclear weapon free, as the modernization of nuclear weapons was being proceeded.

5. The statements of the local bishops regarding nuclear weapons

Apart from Holy See and Pontifical statements, local episcopal conferences also expressed their views in connection with nuclear weapons, especially in countries where nuclear weapons were owned and a significant Catholic community lived.⁴⁸ It was important for them to get thorough orientation about the teaching of the Church. The American Episcopal Conference intended to meet the demand with issuing the pastoral letter "The Challenge of Peace" in 1983.⁴⁹ First, the letter deals with the conventional questions of a just war – proportionality, defence and the discrimination of non-combatants, which is applied to nuclear weapons. Then it lists the questions in connection with nuclear weapons: deterrence, arms race, conscientious scruples. Later, the Conference of Bishops indicates the problems of nuclear weapons in three points: the death of the innocent (II/1), the outbreak of a nuclear war (II/2), limited nuclear war (II/3). According to American bishops, nuclear wars do not priori permit the restoration of peace, which is an important element of a just war. Regarding the theory of deterrence, the document is sceptical about the temporary moral acceptance of nuclear weapons, as it does not believe that deterrence would be able to secure persistent peace.⁵⁰ However, as Pope John Paul II considered it to be morally acceptable – in his 1982 speech – to possess nuclear weapons as far as they served as means of deterrence and the preservation of peace, American bishops did not want to contradict this pontifical declaration either. Although, it could be felt that they did not share the Pope's opinion completely in this question. The document deals with determining the concept of deterrence thoroughly: paragraph 163 highlights that the idea of deterrence has always existed in military strategy. However, in the nuclear age deterrence means withholding a possible enemy with means that can cause "unacceptable damage". The ability of deterrence – according to the letter – depends on whether the parties

⁴⁸ It is not negligible, that lots of catholics take part in political life as well.

⁴⁹ NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS: *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*. 03. 05. 1983. <http://bit.ly/35kGTGP>

⁵⁰ "In concert with the evaluation provided by Pope John Paul II, we have arrived at a strictly conditional moral acceptance of deterrence. In this letter we have outlined criteria and recommendations which indicate the meaning of conditional acceptance of deterrence policy. We cannot consider such a policy adequate as a long-term basis for peace."

are able to protect these facilities from the first strike, or whether they are willing to refrain from using weapons which appear to have a first strike capability. (par. 163) Furthermore, deterrence should be authentic, permanent and capable of making clear that it is not possible to use nuclear weapons without consequences. The documents (par. 164) points out that beside the general definition of deterrence, a detailed description of the subjects would be required, which did not happen until the document was issued. To this, according to the reference of the document, abundance of the technical literature, the declaratory policy on deterrence and action policy – that is the documents of military policy – should be considered.⁵¹ It is essential to know military strategies to evaluate nuclear deterrence morally. (par. 177) It accepts that deterrence is needed, “but not all forms of deterrence are morally acceptable.”⁵² Additionally, not only strategic documents should be considered, but in all cases “discrimination”, that is the protection of civil population, and proportionality, so the use of nuclear weapons should lead to more advantages than the damage they cause, should be respected. But who can judge the proportion of loss and advantage? According to the principles of the document: a retaliatory strike cannot be allowed if it is targeting cities or inhabited territories, even if military targets are in a city or near a city. (par. 180) When military bases are attacked, “collateral damage” cannot be accepted referring to civil casualties. (par. 181–182) According to this interpretation, any strike that can have a number of civil casualties, regardless of the indirect or direct target of the strike, is morally unacceptable. The letter implies that because of the devastating power, the range of nuclear weapons, or the reaction of the other party, it is impossible to speak about proportionality when these weapons are used. The use of these weapons brings along the escalation of wars automatically. American bishops determined the three points whose realization was essential to justify the possession of nuclear weapons: 1; to prevent the use of nuclear weapons by others, 2; to reject the quest for nuclear superiority, 3; current possession is a necessary step toward progressive disarmament (par. 188) So, the possession – as means of deterrence – cannot be accepted for the use, growing production and protection of “status quo”, it is only acceptable in the hope of maintaining peace and progressive disarmament.⁵³ The US episcopal conference makes six recommendations: 1; immediate, bilateral, verifiable agreements to halt the testing, production, and deployment of new nuclear weapons systems. 2; bilateral agreement of both superpowers regarding the disarmament of nuclear arsenal. 3; successful negotiations of a comprehensive test ban treaty. 4; removal of short-range nuclear weapons, because they make the deterrent value disproportionate. 5; removal of nuclear weapons from areas where they are likely to be overrun in the early stages of war, thus

⁵¹ Gregory SHAUN: *Nuclear Command and Control in NATO: Nuclear Weapons Operations and the Strategy of Flexible Response*. New York, Palgrave–MacMillan, 1996. 67–71.; VARGA, Gergely: Stratégiai koncepciók a kezdetektől Lisszabonig. *Nemzet és Biztonság*, 2010/9. 16–25.

⁵² “Although we acknowledge the need for deterrence, not all forms of deterrence are morally acceptable.” par. 178.

⁵³ NEBEL–GIUDETTI op. cit. 39.

forcing rapid and uncontrollable decisions on their use. 6; command and control over nuclear weapons should be strengthened to prevent inadvertent and unauthorized use.

After the publication of “The Challenge of Peace”, Bishop John S. Cummins from Oakland organized a set of conferences with the researchers of Lawrence-Livermore Laboratory (California) and the theologians and ethics experts of Berkeley Centre. Berkeley Centre, as the research centre of ethics in religion at Georgetown University, made serious researches on using and possessing nuclear weapons.⁵⁴ The so called Oakland dialogue significantly contributed on more thorough moral evaluation of nuclear weapons in the American Catholic Church during the hard period of the Cold War. The conferences helped Catholic faithfuls and researchers to acquire a comprehensive view of using nuclear energy for peaceful and wartime goals from the point of Catholic teaching, tradition and ethics. As a part of the dialogue, nuclear energy and its alternatives were studied as well.⁵⁵

In 1993, ten years after the publication of the pastoral letter “The Challenge of Peace”, the American Conference of Bishops issued another letter: “The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace”. The new security state, regarding the termination of Warsaw Pact and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, was taken into consideration. Furthermore, the difficulty that was caused by Pope John Paul’s speech, because of which Catholic Church leaders and researchers of security policy represented different views regarding nuclear deterrence, was also taken into consideration. Some American bishops thought that the possession of nuclear weapons as means of deterrence was still acceptable provided the guidelines of letter 83 and of other forums of the universal church were followed. Other church leaders thought that, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, nothing could prove to maintain the moral acceptance of nuclear weapons regarding deterrence. How certain nations can be expected to refrain from nuclear weapons while we, referring to deterrence, provide moral basis to possess these weapons, as the new letter quotes some American bishops.⁵⁶ Anyway, the document keeps the basic principles of Letter 83 regarding deterrence (II E 1), while it refers to the previous views as total disarmament agenda.⁵⁷

Later, the Catholic Church and National Conference of Catholic Bishops cooperated with the government in developing a number of arms control and disarmament programs, such as the 2010 START Treaty between the United States and Russia, or the 2015 nuclear treaty with Iran.

As the Holy See acted more and more decidedly concerning nuclear weapons, American bishops expressed their views more powerfully as well.⁵⁸ In April, 2010 Bishop Francis George, then the president of the United States Conference of Catholic

⁵⁴ To the research institution see: <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/>

⁵⁵ CHRISTIANSEN op. cit. 3–4.

⁵⁶ “What is the moral basis for asking other nations to forego nuclear weapons if we continue to judge our own deterrent to be morally necessary?”

⁵⁷ National Conference of Catholic Bishops: *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*. <http://bit.ly/2qteAht>

⁵⁸ The statements of the American Episcopal Conference and of bishops’ on nuclear questions: <http://bit.ly/37iXmgL>

Bishops, explained in his letter to Barack Obama, that nuclear weapons could not be compared to other weapons, as they had such destructive power that endangered human life and dignity. Therefore, the use of these weapons, according to the teaching of the church on just war, was unacceptable. Oscar Cantú, the chairman of Iustitia et Pax committee of the conference, declared – supporting the views of the Holy See – total disarmament in several forums.⁵⁹ The conference – in the light of the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church, the guidelines of the conciliar documents and newer magisterial statements – supported those international efforts in American public and political life that were aiming at banning nuclear weapons.⁶⁰

There is no doubt that the American is the most significant local church that made statements in connection with nuclear weapons. Besides, other episcopal conferences made shorter or longer statements in the topic. The German Bishops' Conference published the pastoral letter *Gerechtigkeit schafft Frieden* in 1983.⁶¹ Compared to the concept of the American Bishops', it speaks more strictly, as it says deterrence is not sufficient enough to prevent a war. The German conference made gestures towards allied military policy, as speaks supportively about questions such as “flexible response” or keeping nuclear weapons to prevent conventional wars.⁶² The standpoint of the German bishops' is in accordance with the speech of Pope John Paul II's in the UN to an extent that nuclear weapons are considered to be temporary and enough means of deterrence, but they cannot be means to increase the chances of a war. They accept the philosophy of deterrence, but they considered these weapons to be undeployable, as their destructive power can even result the devastation of Europe.⁶³ However, the use of nuclear weapons is morally unacceptable. So, it is a totally fair question, how can a weapon that cannot be deployed be deterrent power? In 2000, German bishops published a new document entitled *Gerechter Friede*.⁶⁴ In this document they were trying to explain the declarations of the conference of bishops during the Cold War. However, it is more interesting that it maintains the moral justification of nuclear deterrence until superpowers own a significant amount of nuclear arsenal. (par. 2)⁶⁵

Summary

The nature of wars, sufficient causes to start them, norms to be kept in wars, applicable tools – are all eternal moral dilemmas of wars in the society. The Catholic Church, as the bearer of divine revelation, feels competent to make statements concerning moral

⁵⁹ Oscar CANTÚ: Nuclear Disarmament: Time for Abolition. <http://bit.ly/343XhLY>

⁶⁰ NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS: Nuclear Disarmament: Seeking Human Security. <http://bit.ly/330E8ZV>

⁶¹ DIE DEUTSCHEN BISCHÖFE: *Gerechtigkeit schafft Frieden*. 18. April 1983. Bonn, Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz. 1983.

⁶² Ibid. 53.

⁶³ Ibid. 55.

⁶⁴ DIE DEUTSCHEN BISCHÖFE: *Gerechter Friede*. <http://bit.ly/2pwepl7>

⁶⁵ Dorothy G. RANAGHAN: *War and Christian Identity*. New City Press, Hyde Park, 2011.

questions, such as wars, that affect the society. The church, recognizing the changes in the “security environment” and the implementation of new tools, reassessed and rephrased those ideas that were known as the principles of just war during history. It happened at the birth of scientific weapons. Because of their indiscriminate and destructive effects, the church reflected to the possible dangers when they were in their experimental stage. In his encyclical, *Pacem in terris*, Pope John XXIII systematically dealt with the problems deriving from deploying nuclear weapons. Later, his concept was adopted by the Second Vatican Council and Pope John II as well.

It was always obvious on the part of the Church that the deployment of the weapons – because of their effects – was immoral. But the attitude of the Church was not so clear referring to possession, especially when it meant possessing in order to deter the other party from attacking. The real turning arrived with the speech of Pope John Paul II’s in the UN, in 1982. The disarmament programs, launched by the superpowers and supported by the international community, and the consideration of *realpolitik* led the Pope to find the temporary possession of nuclear weapons as means of deterrence morally acceptable.

The Pope himself found the moral acceptance of the temporary possession of nuclear weapons to be a temporary state towards progressive disarmament. With his speech – until present days – he determined the views of Catholic leaders and security politicians who rejected total nuclear pacifism, and gave a role to these weapons in maintaining international peace.

From the 1980s, Conferences of Bishops that were most affected concerning nuclear weapons published theologically, militarily and technologically developed documents. In these pastoral-like statements the need to comply with the standpoint of the Holy See and the consideration of national circumstances could be felt, but in certain cases the resulting dissonance as well. In this question the declarations of American and German bishops’ were the most significant.

Although after the Cold War, Pope John Paul II, and the ecclesiastical documents, later Pope Benedict XVI strengthened the concepts of progressive disarmament, but the real turning point came with the current Pope. Pope Francis definitely stated: 1. the deterrence accepted during the Cold War, and the moral justification of nuclear weapons cannot be maintained any more. 2; the aim is the progressive disarmament and the prohibition of nuclear weapons. 3; It is a sin to possess nuclear weapons.

While Washington and the western world still seem to think of nuclear arsenal according to the logic of Cold War deterrence, Pope Francis and the Holy See argue for the moral intolerability of these old principles. The Pope and the diplomatic body emphasized in several forums that the deployment of these weapons contradicted the principles of a conventional Christian just war such as proportionality and discrimination – the protection of non-combatants. According to the Church, common good – *bonum commune* – is not limited to one country; it is understood for the whole mankind. After the deployment of nuclear weapons, it is not easy to imagine restoring peace, the most valuable good of the community, because of the damages and resentment. Furthermore, we cannot forget that there is logical contradiction if we threaten, “deter” with a weapon that cannot be deployed because of the above mentioned principles.

We have the right to ask: does Pope Francis not see that the direction he follows and political reality run contrary? The Pope does see it clearly, but he sees that the world has arrived at a turning point in several questions, and we have to make a decision whether to choose the “reality” of politics or the existence of mankind. Among these questions, the existence or non-existence of nuclear weapons is one of the most significant.

Sancta Maria – Regina pacis, ora pro nobis! Holy Mary – Queen of peace, pray for us!