8.7 Weapons of Mass Destruction: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8062 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Explain two contrasting religious beliefs about whether it can ever be acceptable for a country to possess weapons of mass destruction. Refer to a source of wisdom and authority in your answer.

(Total for Question 1 is 5 marks)

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2 This question is about religious and non-religious perspectives on weapons of mass destruction. It is the AQA-style 24-mark, five-part question: parts (a) to (d) are worth 12 marks; part (e) is the 12-mark evaluation.

(a) State one reason why a country might choose to give up its weapons of mass destruction. **(1)**

(b) Give two reasons why some people support the idea of nuclear deterrence. **(2)**

(c) Explain two religious teachings about the value of human life that are relevant to the ethics of weapons of mass destruction. Refer to a source of wisdom and authority in your answer. **(4)**

(d) Explain two contrasting views, religious and/or non-religious, about whether nuclear deterrence keeps the world safer. Refer to a source of wisdom and authority or another source in your answer. **(5)**

(e) Evaluate this statement: 'No country should ever possess weapons of mass destruction.' In your answer you should: refer to religious teaching, refer to different points of view, reach a justified conclusion. **(12)**

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(Total for Question 2 is 24 marks)

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Mark scheme · 8.7 Weapons of Mass Destruction: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

belief 1: some religious believers hold that possessing such weapons purely as a deterrent, with no intention of using them, can be morally acceptable if it prevents a greater evil, oe **B1**

development: this view sometimes appeals to the just war principle of proportionality, arguing that avoiding a worse war can justify holding, though not using, such weapons, oe **B1**

belief 2: other religious believers, including many pacifists, argue that possessing weapons that could never be used in a just way is itself wrong, whatever the intention, oe **B1**

development: Jesus's teaching 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God' (Matthew 5:9) is used by many Christians to argue that even holding such weapons works against the call to be a peacemaker, oe **B1**

reference to a source of wisdom and authority made accurately, oe **B1**

Answer: Contrast: deterrence-based acceptance of possession under proportionality vs pacifist-influenced rejection of possessing weapons that could never be used justly (Matthew 5:9).

Question 2

(a) a belief that such weapons are morally wrong to hold, or a wish to reduce the risk of catastrophic harm to civilians worldwide, oe **B1**

(a) Answer: E.g. a belief that such weapons are morally wrong to hold, or a wish to reduce global risk to civilians.

(b) they believe holding such weapons makes another country less likely to attack first, oe **B1**

(b) they believe giving up such weapons unilaterally could leave a country vulnerable while others keep theirs, oe **B1**

(b) Answer: E.g. discourages a first attack; avoids one-sided vulnerability if other countries keep theirs.

(c) point 1: many Christians teach that every human life is sacred because people are made in the image of God, which places a strong limit on any weapon that risks mass civilian death, oe **B1**

(c) development: Genesis teaches that God made humankind 'in his own image' (Genesis 1:27), which many Christians use to argue for the sanctity of every human life, oe **B1**

(c) point 2: many Muslims teach that taking one innocent life is treated with the utmost seriousness, which applies with particular force to weapons that cannot avoid killing many innocent people at once, oe **B1**

(c) development: the Qur'an teaches that 'whoever kills a soul... it is as if he had slain mankind entirely, and whoever saves one, it is as if he had saved mankind entirely' (Qur'an 5:32), oe **B1**

(c) Answer: E.g. humans made in God's image (Genesis 1:27); the seriousness of taking one life (Qur'an 5:32).

(d) view 1: some argue that deterrence has, in practice, discouraged countries that possess these weapons from fighting each other directly, making the world safer in that specific sense, oe **B1**

(d) development: this is sometimes described by international relations scholars as a stability created by mutual risk, where no side wants to be the first to escalate to catastrophic weapons, oe **B1**

(d) view 2: many religious and non-religious campaigners argue deterrence is not truly safe, because it depends on every leader always acting rationally and no accident or miscalculation ever occurring, oe **B1**

(d) development: many Christian and Muslim voices, alongside secular disarmament campaigners, argue that the only fully safe outcome is a reduction in the number and spread of such weapons, oe **B1**

(d) reference to a source of wisdom and authority or another appropriate source made accurately, oe **B1**

(d) Answer: Contrast: deterrence as a stabilising 'balance of risk' vs the view that deterrence is fragile and disarmament is the only truly safe path.

(e) **L4** A well-argued, balanced answer that considers more than one point of view in a developed way, using accurate and detailed references to religious teaching and/or scripture to support each point, and reaches a clear, justified conclusion. **10-12**

(e) **L3** A clear and reasoned answer that considers more than one point of view, supported by relevant references to religious teaching and/or scripture, though the justification of the conclusion may be less developed. **7-9**

(e) **L2** A reasoned answer that considers at least one point of view, with some relevant supporting evidence, but with limited or no consideration of an alternative view. **4-6**

(e) **L1** One or more relevant points are made, but with little or no supporting evidence and no reasoned conclusion. **1-3**

(e) **L0** No relevant content. **0**

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(e) Indicative content:

- Agree: many religious believers argue that because these weapons cannot discriminate between combatants and civilians, possessing them, not just using them, works against the just war principle of discrimination.
- Agree: the historical example of the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is often used to show the immense and lasting human cost such weapons can cause when used, seen by many as reason enough never to hold them.
- Agree: many Humanists argue on secular grounds that the risk of catastrophic, irreversible harm to civilians is so great that no strategic benefit can outweigh it.
- Agree: some argue that possessing such weapons, even only for deterrence, keeps alive the ever-present risk of accident, miscalculation or misuse, which is itself an unacceptable moral gamble.
- Disagree: some religious and non-religious thinkers argue that giving them up unilaterally could leave a country dangerously exposed while other states keep theirs, which could make conflict more, not less, likely.
- Disagree: some argue from just war reasoning that possessing, but never using, such weapons purely to prevent a greater war can be a proportionate and defensible choice, distinguishing possession from use.
- Disagree: some point out that international agreements to limit or reduce such weapons already exist, arguing that gradual, verified disarmament is more realistic and safer than an immediate, unilateral 'never possess' rule.
- A middle position: many religious voices support working towards eventual global disarmament while accepting that possession by responsible, accountable states is a lesser evil than a chaotic, uncontrolled spread of such weapons in the meantime.
- A balanced answer might conclude that the moral case against ever using such weapons is very widely shared, but that the statement's 'ever possess' claim is more contested, since possession and use raise distinct ethical questions.

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