

The Ideology of Empire: A View from “America’s Attic”

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The most fundamental problem of politics . . . is not the control of wickedness but the limitation of righteousness. —Henry Kissinger¹

LDS ATTITUDES TOWARDS WAR AND peace in general have been covered fairly comprehensively in the past decade or so.² The attitudes are complex and generally attempt to strike a balance between the duty to de-

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1. Henry A. Kissinger, *The World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace, 1812-22* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1954; published New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1957); quoted in Robert D. Kaplan, “Kissinger, Metternich and Realism,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1999, online edition, <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/99jun/9906kissinger.htm>.

2. Robert S. Wood, “War and Peace,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4:1547-50; Steven A. Hildreth, “The First Presidency Statement on MX in Perspective,” *BYU Studies* 22, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 215-25; Marc A. Schindler, “Is There Such a Thing as a ‘Moral War?’” *DIALOGUE*, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 152-60.

fend one's life, family, property and liberties on the one hand, with the commandment to renounce war as a tool of Satan on the other. While there is more than enough material in LDS scriptures and commentary to support a number of positions, until very recently any dichotomy in LDS attitudes towards specific wars has generally been seen only in the context of U.S. foreign policy. As the Church continues to grow internationally, it can no longer be taken for granted that all Latter-day Saints will confirm the ideology by which the United States justifies its wars. This essay attempts to identify a two-by-two matrix of ideological filters which individual Latter-day Saints of all countries can use to formulate positions and express them regarding specific wars in which the United States, as the world's only "hyper-puissance,"³ enters, and help separate their own LDS-ness from the geopolitical interests of their own countries as well as that of the United States. One hopes this will also be a useful exercise for U.S. Saints as well, since generalizations concerning the views of U.S. Saints, too, are bound to be too simplistic to be useful.

Despite the reputation of U.S. Mormons for being right-wing, there is actually tremendous variation in political beliefs, but this often puzzles foreign Saints, who wonder at times just what is U.S. political culture of a certain stripe and what is actually "gospel." If we form our opinions knowing why and how this formation occurs, we will be better suited to being productive and active citizens in whatever country we live. At the same time, we can readily accept that a Latter-day Saint in Finland or Florida may have very different views on a specific political issue than an Australian or an Alaskan member without aspersions being cast upon those views by a pseudo-orthodoxy originating from the political culture of the Wasatch Front. There must be room to disagree on issues which are not related to orthodoxy or orthopraxis when such disagreements do not strike at core LDS doctrine. This is a separation that is, at present, often difficult to make.

This essay will not argue for or against any specific view, although I do use several wars in which the United States has been involved as mostly negative examples of wars that are not in the United States's best interests and not in Mormons' best interests either. As a result, my personal anti-war opinion will be hard to hide. But the examples are meant to illus-

3. "Hyper-power," coined by France's prime minister, Lionel Jospin.

trate a methodology by which one can form specific political opinions and express them, stripped of implicit assumptions of which we may not be aware, and which are not definitive of Mormonism in any case, even when expressed in Mormon cultural terms.

Take the example of two people who consider themselves in favour of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Even though they agree, we still cannot take it for granted that they will have reached that same conclusion for the same reasons, and of course they could well disagree on other issues. Being in favour of or against a specific issue, such as the war in Iraq, is a *stance*. It is arrived at and is expressed using language characteristic of an underlying *ideology*, which is a filter built out of each person's experiences, beliefs, assumptions, cultural background, and so on. Often, ideological analysis will result in what sociologists call "demographic clusters," associate stances which on the surface appear to be disparate but which do relate consistently if one is aware of an underlying ideology. A typical "scattergram" of demographic clusters may predict that if, for instance, you're anti-abortion, you'll probably be anti-gun control, too—provided you live in the United States. In another country, this association may not exist, and some other scattergram might be more typical.

But there is a level even further removed from stances on issues than underlying ideology, and that is *meta-ideology*, or the set of foundational values about how we approach ideology and create ideological filters through which we can come to conclusions on specific issues. For instance, even Canadian right-wing politicians are in favour of universal health care, and right-wing politicians such as N. Eldon Tanner became Democrats when they moved to the United States. That is because universal access to health care is a national value in Canada. The United States feels Canada does not pull its weight militarily, but that is because having a powerful military is a U.S. national value; Canada prefers U.N.-associated peacekeeping roles instead. These differences arise out of fundamental differences in the two countries.

In any case, the concept of meta-ideology should help a French Latter-day Saint understand the U.S. view, and a British Saint the German view, and Latter-day Saints as a whole the principles upon which the Church bases its doctrines of war, yet still permit a spectrum of stances on any given issue (again, as long as it doesn't strike at core doctrine). To keep this approach simple, I use "realism" and "idealism" as two meta-ideological approaches, and "empire" and "manifest destiny" as the

corresponding ideologies which their associated values yield. The two ideologies are similar in many ways but are reached for different reasons.

I am proposing a two-by-two matrix which helps organize, albeit a bit simplistically, meta-ideology and ideology, using two different stances on the issue of specific wars (notably the current Iraqi situation) to illustrate these concepts.

| <i>Meta-ideology</i> | <i>Ideology</i> | <i>Issue-specific Stance</i> |
|----------------------|--|---|
| "Realism" | U.S. as hyper-power protecting its geopolitical interests: "imperialism" | <i>Pro-war</i> : necessary evil <i>Anti-war</i> : danger of "blowback"* |
| "Idealism" | U.S. as destined power with a mission to project democratic principles: "manifest destiny" | <i>Pro-war</i> : triumph of righteousness over evil <i>Anti-war</i> : contrary to American democratic principles |

*The intelligence community uses "blowback" to mean unintended consequences for which impact is more significant than the action which precipitated them.

Why only U.S. examples? Even if the current trend towards faster LDS growth outside the United States presents us with a situation where U.S. Americans are a small minority of members by the end of the twenty-first century, this century will still see the geo-cultural driving force for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as being "American" in some way, just as the Roman Empire was the vehicle for expansion for the primitive church. Religio-cultural leadership will continue to be characterized as white and North American for decades to come, despite where the Church actually grows fastest. As many Mormons express their ideologies in religious terms even if in some cases it is not really a religious issue, more and more Church leaders and members alike must learn to separate strictly doctrinal from cultural and geographical issues.

I use all of these terms in a value-neutral way in the sense that all the stances discussed can find backing in LDS scripture and commentary. Some ideological and meta-ideological components may well be cultural

in nature and not necessarily personal. As a very simple example, the respect most U.S. Americans have for their flag (as opposed to the active indifference Germans have towards theirs) is an ideological component which needs to be understood before stances on related issues can be communicated without talking past one another.⁴ How U.S. Americans came to have this respect and how Germans came to be more than indifferent towards theirs can be compared only at a level above the actual issue, or else we have to believe that there is something innately different between an American *homo sapiens* and a German *homo sapiens*, a difficult argument to make and still try to keep a cohesive international community structured from the top down.⁵

In using this matrix, it is important not to succumb to oversimplifications. Not all citizens of any country, including the United States, are ever unanimous in their views; and while this observation is also true for the rest of the world, when each country is taken individually or regionally, the role that LDS culture plays in any given country will vary tremendously. The reasons are not particularly hard to fathom. LDS culture tends to limit membership growth in Europe, for instance, but is a boon in Africa and other parts of the world. Europeans see the American cultural baggage that comes with Mormonism and may reject both while, at the other end of the spectrum, it is precisely those same middle-class, conservative values that appeal to many in developing countries who are struggling to build a middle-class society in a democratic polity.

Note that, as already mentioned, the same stance can be taken starting from two entirely different meta-ideologies, which in turn inform two parallel ideologies but with different iconic (symbolic) language. Likewise, two people who share both an ideology and meta-ideology may still manifest different stances. We may use the same terms to express our stances but assign

4. Even in Canada, the Church flies the Canadian flag in front of its chapels and temples. Is this a Canadian version of the U.S. practice or an attempt to impose U.S. values on a foreign culture? Surprisingly, it is the latter, albeit a well-meaning attempt, since very few non-LDS churches in Canada fly flags. It is not that we don't fly our flag, it is just that we have other metonymic symbols of state which share the same ideological space.

5. The Anglicans have solved this problem by fragmenting into national churches which are only vaguely top-down structured. The Archbishop of Canterbury hardly commands the respect and obedience among Anglicans/Episcopalians that the LDS prophet commands among Mormons.

them different meanings. For example, *liberal* has been more or less demonized in the United States; but in most western industrialized democracies, it means pro-entrepreneur/anti-government intervention.⁶

I chose the labels “realism” and “idealism” as representative meta-ideologies because they manifest the malleability of our ideologies and, since they operate on ideologies, they stand at a level above ideologies. Are we rigid? Do we see ourselves as taking a stand on principle? Does it take a lot to change our minds? If so, we would be more idealistic, relying more on internal ideological attitudes in forming our views about specific issues. If our views are malleable and subject to change, if we can maintain ambiguous views simultaneously or hesitate to form concrete conclusions quickly, we are usually “realists.” Neither approach is inherently more moral or useful than the other. A realist might see an idealist as naïve, and an idealist might see a realist as cynical.

I am using the example of the two Gulf wars precisely because they are controversial. Thus, we can analyze how we come to feel the way we do about specific issues (war-related in this case). It is important to make this point because, politically, I am an outsider, a Canadian living in “America’s Attic.” I also live in “Zion’s Attic,” as a Mormon connected to but separated from its core culture area.

As a Canadian, I have the world view of a comfortable but marginalized power: Canada may be larger than the United States in area, but 85% of Canadians live within 250 kilometers of the U.S. border, and we have only a tenth of the population. This affects many things, from how we approach security concerns to national infrastructure to immigration policies to cultural heterogeneity. Our political values are formed not only by our religious and personal beliefs, but also by where we live. Sometimes these values overlap with U.S. values, and sometimes they do not. It can

6. For instance, in Germany the FDP is known as “die Liberalen.” It customarily acts as the junior coalition partner when the CDU/CSU are in power, the latter being roughly the German counterpart to the Republicans in the United States. Canada has been ruled by a Liberal government for over a decade now and is running surplus budgets, paying down debt, and lowering taxes—not what a U.S. American would expect from a party of that name. However, like libertarians, while both the German Liberalen and the Canadian Liberals are like U.S. fiscal conservatives, they are more like the U.S. Democratic Party on social policy.

often be difficult even to determine whether they are similar if we rely only on the language of issues.

I also mean *empire* and *manifest destiny* to be as value neutral as possible because while they appear to be similar ideologies, they arise out of different meta-ideologies. To the extent that the United States is an empire, it surely must rate as the most benign in human history, some misadventures here and there notwithstanding. Possessing such power does, however, engender a divine sense of mission common to all empires.

The *Pax Romana* was considered a stable, stabilizing influence over the Mediterranean, and its emperors were considered semi-divine. More recently, Britain bore the “white man’s burden”⁷ with High Protestant dignity, and the United States now represents a similar power, its constitutional principles even being quasi-canonical for Latter-day Saints. My meta-ideological analysis thus yields two different connotations of the term *empire*, separate not only because of their effect, but also because of their purpose.

The ideologies that we use to justify a stance on an issue often leave opponents divided, using the same iconic language either to justify their own position or to demonize that of their opponents. Iconic language reflects certain values (meta-ideologies) and certain attitudes toward those values (ideologies). Not only does iconic language consist of loaded, highly connotative words like “liberal,” but it also indicates the source of our news. (Do we prefer the *Wall Street Journal* to the *New York Times*? Do we prefer Fox News to CNN, the *Guardian*, or the *Daily Telegraph*?)

Hawkish icons include Ezra Taft Benson’s writings, Captain Moroni’s standard of liberty, and the account in Alma 43:45–47 as scriptural justification for war on behalf of the higher cause of liberty. Those who are dovish often use as ideological icons the writings of President Spencer W. Kimball⁸ and Professor Hugh Nibley or the story of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies (Alma 27:21).

If we use the first Gulf War of 1990 and the second Gulf War of 2003 as specific examples, it’s possible to tease out the different justifications under which they were waged. They make a useful contrast. Accord-

7. Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden,” *McClure’s Magazine*, February 1899; also online: <http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/kipling/kipling.html>.

8. For example, “The First Presidency Statement on Basing of MX Missile,” issued May 5, 1981, in “News of the Church,” *Ensign*, June 1981, 76.

ing to meta-ideology matrix, the two proponents on either side of the issue might phrase their stances regarding the second Gulf War using these rationales:

1. *"Realist"—empire = pro-war.* It is vital to U.S. interests to control access to Central Asia, to insulate what it cannot control, and to defend Israel. The primary interest in the region is to protect access to petroleum for U.S. and U.K. multinationals, and this cannot be secured without a fundamental realignment of the regimes in the region. The region is subject to influences from a number of competing countries, including Russia, Turkey, France, Britain and the United States. This is an unstable political situation, and realists hate instability almost above all else. This position is not as cynical as it may sound to an idealist. A realist would point out that any government that *didn't* see to its country's interests would not be worthy of holding power and should be replaced.

2. *"Realist"—empire = anti-war.* It may well be vital to secure U.S. interests in this region, but Israel is a millstone around the neck of U.S. foreign policy, and the consequences of involving a country like Pakistan in an action against Iraq/Afghanistan could have the very undesirable side-effect of inadvertently promoting an Islamicist power with porous borders (good for guerrilla warfare), the nuclear bomb, and a serious border dispute with the world's largest democracy, India, over Kashmir. Furthermore, there are plenty of stabler countries in which U.S. and U.K. multinationals are free to operate with little security risk, so why take the added risk of trying to operate in such a difficult part of the world?

3. *"Idealist"—manifest destiny = pro-war.* The two Gulf Wars were the proper responses to a threat against the United States in particular and western liberal democracy in general. What the United States does in its foreign policy is by its nature an action that is part of a "greater cause," undertaken to protect democracy and liberate people suffering under brutal dictators. This claim is enhanced within LDS circles by the belief that the events of the Restoration took place largely in the United States, that the Constitution of the United States is inspired by God, that the New Zion refers to Greater America, for which the United States implicitly speaks, and that the American people are good-willed and would never knowingly engage in an evil enterprise. Idealists see the invasion of Iraq as the removal of a direct threat but also as part of a greater plan to democratise the Middle East.

4. *"Idealist"—manifest destiny = anti-war.* The idealist anti-war position

would claim that the war against Iraq was unprovoked and that, while it is indeed up to the United States to play a world leadership role, the rationales stated for the invasion of Iraq in particular have been revealed as hollow. Since idealists are uneasy with ambiguity, the cognitive dissonance of learning that the reasons given for invading Iraq were largely without foundation represents a threat to their ideology. Being idealists they are not very malleable, and this kind of development introduces an uncomfortable suspicion that U.S. foreign policy might not be so self-evidently "righteous" after all but that the United States engages in *realpolitik* the way any other government does and even engages in imperialism. These are distressing conclusions that idealists will try to avoid reaching at all costs.

As divisive as these ideological splits are in the United States, they will become even more acute as the Church continues to grow, both overseas (where, indeed, the growth rate is faster) and in the United States. Harold Bloom, presumably referring indirectly to Rodney Stark's studies of LDS growth rates, wrote:

One gets the impression that the present Mormon leadership is very patient; they believe that much of the future is theirs, particularly in America. We have not yet had a Mormon President of the United States, and perhaps we never will, but . . . what would the Mormons wish to do if the United States ever has so large a Mormon population, and so wealthy a consolidation of Mormon economic power, that governing our democracy became impossible without Mormon cooperation?⁹

We need to explore the contrasting ideologies of imperialism and manifest destiny more, to see why one emerges from realism and the other from idealism. I usually try to avoid *empire* when referring to the United States because it gives offence. However, there are two types of empires, with important differences.

Endogenous empires are China, Russia, Australia, Canada, and the United States, characterized by their enormous size and their history of either achieving independence after being colonized from without or in being taken over by an autochthonous population within its borders. For example, the Han were once confined to a relatively small region in what is modern China but have, over the centuries, expanded into areas previ-

9. Harold Bloom, *The American Religion* (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 89-90.

ously occupied by other ethnic groups. The Han now predominate in the more populous areas, but Greater China is still so heterogeneous that the so-called Chinese language is really a collection of mutually incomprehensible dialects which share only a common orthography.

As another example, various czars over the past several centuries expanded Russia with its relatively small region around Moscow until it spanned the Eurasian continent. Today ethnic Russians constitute 80 percent of the Russian Federation and form substantial minorities in many former Soviet republics but have also absorbed numerous smaller ethnic groups. Again, Russians predominate, but there is still a surprising amount of ethnic diversity.

The United States, Canada, and Australia are examples of countries where technologically primitive autochthonous peoples lived. These people were easily overwhelmed by European technology, immunity to disease, and stabler military and commercial interests. The United States started on what is now the central Atlantic coast of North America and grew south and west by conquest, sometimes against European colonial powers, but usually at the expense of First Nations or aboriginal societies.¹⁰ Canada, occupying the northern and less fertile half of the continent, more or less kept pace along a 250-kilometer-wide march bordering the United States. Australia was settled first largely as a collection of British penal colonies, but it grew fairly quickly into an independent country whose population has clustered largely along the southeast coast and which, again, took over land that had been declared *terra nullis* (uninhabited for purposes of the law), but which nevertheless contained autochthonous peoples who had lived there for thousands of years.

The second type of exogenous empire is the more familiar type: a European power with a relatively small home region, but with relatively large naval assets and powerful economies, obtained territories largely for the purposes of tightly directed trade (mercantilism). These territories were ruled either directly from the imperial capitals or through puppet

10. See, especially, Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999) and Mark K. Stengel, "The Diffusionists Have Landed," *Atlantic Monthly*, January 2000, online edition, <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2000/01/001stengel.htm>. This article is an especially poignant description of how a stable society can be virtually eradicated in a very short time.

governments. The mercantile system developed to provide both a source of cheap labour and raw materials for home industries as well as a market for home industries manufactures. Recent examples include the empires of Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Germany, France, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, the Netherlands, and even Denmark. Mercantilism was often enforced by imperial navies, as in the case of coastal trade beach-heads in China and India.

The United States, at the end of the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth centuries, has always teetered on the fulcrum of this dichotomous definition. Occasional presidents have sought to obtain overseas possessions like the "true" empires, while other presidents were noninterventionist, sometimes to the point of being isolationist. The principle of Manifest Destiny, partly influenced by religious conviction, drove the expansion of the United States into adjoining frontier lands. The United States also adopted the Monroe Doctrine in the early nineteenth century, which stated that intervention by Old World powers in the New World would not be tolerated. The United States thus became the military guarantor of New World freedom from European colonialism. More importantly, the United States was willing to enforce this doctrine with military might; and after a number of incidents in places like Venezuela, Colombia/Panama, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic, European powers eventually lost interest, although some small European colonies remain in the Caribbean region to this day.

Primarily under President Theodore Roosevelt, the Monroe Doctrine's original intention, which was defensive in nature, took on an offensive nature, an interpretation known today as the Roosevelt Corollary. When the *USS Maine* was blown up in Havana Harbor by unknown parties, or perhaps even accidentally, the United States saw it as a cause of war despite the suspiciousness of the grounds. John Hay, U.S. ambassador to Great Britain, called the Spanish-American War a "splendid little war."¹¹ During this period around the turn of the nineteenth century to the twentieth, the United States made its closest approach to becoming a true imperial power with noncontiguous possessions: invading Puerto Rico, annexing Hawaii on behalf of U.S. sugar interests, agitating

11. John T. Bethel, "A Splendid Little War," *Harvard Magazine*, November-December 1998, on-line edition: <http://www.harvard-magazine.com/issues/nd98/war.html>.

in Colombia to encourage a more pliant negotiating partner (Panama) with respect to building the pan-isthmian canal there, invading the Philippines, and obtaining various other bits and pieces of territory in the Pacific and the Caribbean.

It was J. Reuben Clark Jr. who finally managed to put the brakes on the Roosevelt Corollary. As Undersecretary of State for President Calvin Coolidge, he wrote the document now known as the "Clark Memorandum," which has been called "one of the most important documents dealing with United States foreign relations, and the best known . . . , influential in the resolution of important international issues in addition to shaping the policy of the State Department regarding the Monroe Doctrine."¹²

After three decades of adventurism, the United States finally retreated from this European or exogenous style of imperialism. In fact, the pendulum began to swing in the opposite direction: Clark was an isolationist, and so was Woodrow Wilson. The United States entered both world wars only reluctantly and, in both cases, several years after the conflicts had begun. Americans at Versailles were appalled at the rank animosity and vengeance which drove the treaty proceedings and almost certainly set the stage for World War II. U.S. isolationism was shattered by the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, and the United States was yet again, if reluctantly, involved in a world war, a war which only strengthened the U.S. position in the world.

The Cold War that followed immediately on the heels of World War II, however, drew the United States into a delicately balanced form of over-armed status quo vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, a relationship known as "mutually assured destruction." For some four and a half decades, the world watched this dangerous game of brinkmanship. Technology, specifically in the form of the newly invented nuclear warheads, presented the first "weapon of mass destruction" and paradoxically confined conflict more or less to "client" wars, where the United States (and allies) would

12. Scott Wolfley, "The Clark Memorandum," *Clark Memorandum* 1, no. 1 (1986): 6-9. See also on-line edition: http://www.law2.byu.edu/Law_Society/publications/clark_memorandum.htm; and J. Reuben Clark, *Memorandum on the Monroe Doctrine*, Department of State Publication No. 37 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1930), 238.

back one side in what was usually only a regional dispute at most, while the Soviet Union (and its satellites) would back the other side.

The first major client war during this period was the Korean War, which was, as far as U.S. constitutional law was concerned, a “police action,” so labelled to avoid involving Congress in the cumbersome process of declaring an unpopular war. Technically a United Nations action, it was primarily the United States backing South Korea while the Soviet Union and China backed North Korea. It was expressed not as a regional war, however, but as a struggle between democracy and totalitarianism. Here we see the beginnings of modern U.S. unilateralism. This was not a war over territory, but a clash of civilizations, a war to continue the process of making the world safe for democracy.

Older empires quickly recognized that the United States’s fresh sense of moral imperative, brewed in the uncontaminated cauldron of the New World, could be exploited for European ends, if played properly. After all, South Korea during the Korean War may not have been Communist, but it was still a totalitarian state, a fact that did not prevent the United States from supporting it. Most U.S. leaders were not as naive as their citizenry and saw through the ideologizing. Franklin D. Roosevelt, responding to criticism that the United States was supporting a dictator in Nicaragua, explained it memorably: “He may be a bastard, but he’s our bastard.”¹³

Starting in the 1950s, the United States, fearful of Communist expansion in Asia, slowly started insinuating itself into Southeast Asia, justifying this expansion of the Cold War in terms of the now infamous domino effect doctrine: if we allow Vietnam to fall today, Thailand will fall tomorrow, and so forth. It sent an initial 700 advisors to train the South Vietnamese Army, an action permitted under the Geneva Accord. By 1963 the number had increased to 17,000.

In 1964, after hearing reports (later proved to be false)¹⁴ that North Vietnamese torpedo boats had fired on U.S. warships, Congress adopted the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The U.S. administration finally had a

13. Anastasio “Tacho” Somoza García was part of a dynasty that the United States had supported since the 1930s to protect U.S. commercial interests in the region.

14. To be more precise, it was half-false. North Vietnamese torpedo boats had indeed fired on the *USS Maddox*, a destroyer, but it was only when President

causus belli to back up its ideological intentions. By 1969 U.S. troop strength was at 540,000. In 1970, the war expanded into Cambodia. By 1976, 68,000 American soldiers, approximately 200,000 South Vietnamese soldiers, an estimated 900,000 North Vietnamese soldiers, and an estimated million civilians were dead. From an ideological point of view, this was part of a pattern set earlier in wars against Mexico and Spain, a pattern of realists in position of power giving idealists what they wanted to hear. Hugh Nibley, a veteran of the European theater during World War II, expressed his opposition to the Vietnam War in idealist terms: "Renounce war."¹⁵ He meant not just the Vietnam War, although that was the context for his remarks, but war itself as a vehicle of foreign policy. This is a position only an idealist could really take.

Thus, we come to the critical typological event that happens when a major power, which is a democracy at home and not a centre of a classical empire, nevertheless exerts significant external power that arises from its essential nature, not from bloody-mindedness or evil intent: it must create a justification upon which the citizenry of the United States and its allies can focus, something straightforward and simple. This is the dance of the realists leading the idealists. Alas, these idealistic ventures have almost invariably failed, frequently backfiring to haunt idealists in even more fearsome forms.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was certainly a belligerent act, but the context in which it occurred seems to have been largely forgotten. It is important to examine this conflict to understand why we have reached the place we occupy today [October 2003]. Only a week or so before Saddam Hussein crossed the Kuwaiti border, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, assured him that the United States's stance on Kuwaiti-Iraqi issues was "neutral."¹⁶ It appears that this policy position and Hussein's interpretation of it were a result of several unfortunate coincidences, not a deliberate misstatement by Glaspie. The U.S. Department

Johnson falsely claimed that there had been a second attack that Congress was persuaded to pass the resolution.

15. "Renounce War," letter to the editor, *Daily Universe* (Brigham Young University), March 26, 1971.

16. According to the transcript, her language was even encouraging at times: "U.S. Ambassador Glaspie—We have no opinion on your Arab-Arab conflicts, such as your dispute with Kuwait. Secretary (of State James) Baker has directed me

of State, which is responsible for diplomatic and foreign affairs, was not, apparently, in touch with the Office of the National Security Advisor or the Pentagon. It's hard to believe that Glaspie could have known the consequences of what she was saying—that Hussein would take it as an indication that the United States would not intervene if Iraq chose to “repatriate” its “nineteenth province,” a territorial issue which goes back to Ottoman days.¹⁷

Furthermore, the United States had just backed Iraq in its war against Iran, and Hussein was almost certainly shocked at the U.S. response when he invaded Kuwait. But he had reason to be. From about 1986 to 1989, the United States had actively supported Iraq as a secularist counterbalance to the theocratic Iran. Barely a year after Hussein gassed the rebellious Kurds in the north, a U.S. company that spun off from chemical and biological warfare research conducted at George Washington University legally sold Iraq shipments of anthrax, botulism, and sarin toxins. This nonprofit company, with the rather odd name of the American Type Culture Collection (<http://www.atcc.org>), now located in Manassas, Virginia, is a legitimate company and did nothing illegal. Its shipments were routinely given the needed export licenses by the U.S. Department of Commerce until 1989. The Louis Pasteur Institute in Paris—not only a legitimate organization, but France's premier

to emphasize the instruction, first given to Iraq in the 1960's, that the Kuwait issue is not associated with America. (Saddam smiles.)” Retrieved October 2003 from <http://www.whatreallyhappened.com/ARTICLE5/april.html>; see also <http://csmweb2.emcweb.com/durable/1999/05/27/p23s3.htm>, and Andrew I. Killgore, “Tales of the Foreign Service: In Defense of April Glaspie,” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, August 2002, 49, on-line edition: <http://www.wrmea.com/archives/august2002/0208049.html>.

17. There have always been difficulties because someone in Istanbul or London draws a line on a map. Iraq has had a long-standing border dispute with Iran and with Kuwait, both of which concerned Iraq's bottleneck-like access to the sea. It was left with this inconvenience after the British, in essence, “created” Iraq after World War I by combining three provinces of the Ottoman Empire, but also leaving small states which would serve Britain's interests in the area: Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates, at least nominally and at certain times. The United Kingdom still had an RAF base in Shalala in southern Oman as late as early 2002. See Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919* (New York: Random House, 2002).

medical research institute¹⁸—also supplied Iraq with chemical and biological warfare substances and also discontinued supplying Iraq about the same time the United States did. The aid that Hussein received from the United States and other Western countries is now known to be far greater than heretofore suspected.¹⁹ One can hardly blame Saddam Hussein (politically) for his miscalculation.

In addition, the public relations firm Hill & Knowlton, under contract to the Kuwaiti government, planted a fabricated story, which world media picked up, that the Iraqis had removed premature babies from their incubators in a Kuwait City hospital, thrown the babies onto the ground, and taken the incubators to Iraq. The “source” of this story was an alleged eyewitness, a sobbing young Kuwaiti woman identified only as “Nayirah.”

Where the second Gulf War is concerned, we now know that the justifications for invading Iraq in March 2003 were dubious at best, arising from the same need to produce a *causus belli* as in Vietnam and the first Gulf War. The sanctions, U.N. inspections, and the “no-fly” zones established over half of the country by the United Kingdom and the United States were apparently effective in preventing Saddam Hussein from making weapons of mass destruction for use both locally and against the West. The United States also knows that the link between Iraq and al-Qaeda is misleading. Osama bin Laden hates the West, but he also hates the secularist Ba’athist regimes in Iraq and Syria. The CIA has even admitted that its intelligence was wrong, though not necessarily deliberately.²⁰

The final issue of U.S. *realpolitik* is the claim of the realist anti-war movement that the “real” reason for invading Afghanistan and Iraq is because “it’s only about oil.” Both sides react to this issue, one seeing it as the “real explanation” for the invasion and the other side dismissing it as an insulting fantasy. However, the oil argument has nothing to do with

18. For example, they discovered HIV and established its link with AIDS.

19. Philip Shenon, “Iraq Links Germs for Weapons to U.S. and France,” *New York Times*, March 16, 2003.

20. Marian Wilkinson, “CIA Admits It Can’t Find Weapons,” *The Age* (Melbourne, Australia), September 26, 2003; <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/09/25/1064083125415.html?from=storyrhs> (based in part on a *New York Times* story). The Pakistani government has admitted that Osama bin Laden and his leaders cross the Pakistani-Afghan border virtually at will but complain that it has only limited control in the Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan, the two provinces bordering Afghanistan.

fueling gas-guzzling SUVs, as many in the anti-war camp would put it. Since the first Gulf War, the United States has been weaning itself from Middle East petroleum suppliers, precisely because of instability in the area. By the end of 2002, the top U.S. four petroleum suppliers were Canada, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Mexico. Canada's oil industry is slightly more than 50 percent U.S.-owned, and Mexico is a fellow NAFTA member, so the supply for U.S. consumers is more secure now than it has ever been.²¹ Canada also supplies 94 percent of the U.S.'s natural gas imports.²²

Thus, even though the United States relies more heavily on petroleum imports than ever before, because of the increase in demand over the past decade, more of that supply is coming from stable and nearby sources. The U.S. consumers' lifestyle is not in immediate danger. What is in danger is U.S.- and U.K.-based multinationals' markets as well as foreign supplies of oil. France and Britain also have a strategic interest in Central Asia on behalf of their multinational oil companies.²³ To summarize, the oil argument is that the United States and the United Kingdom must ensure their control over access to major new oil reserves in Central Asia and deny control to their competitors. Iraq and Iran lie in the way.

After presenting all this information on the *realpolitik* of the second Gulf War in particular, I return to the theme: What is our ideology of war and what is our meta-ideology for how one looks at a super-power: self-serving empire or God-mandated instrument of manifest destiny? Any nation seeks to further its interests through its foreign affairs policies. The United States is no exception. If it behaved differently, the government simply could not remain in power. The United States is *the* global super-power right now because it has more economic and military power than any other country. Other countries can only accommodate U.S. foreign affairs as best they can.

21. U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, "Petroleum Supply Monthly Table 5.4," February 2002. Figures are for 2001. Retrieved October 2003 from <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/aer/txt/ptb0504.html>.

22. U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, "Natural Gas Monthly Tables 5 and 6," February 2002. Figures are for 2001. Retrieved October 2003 from <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/aer/txt/ptb0603.html>.

23. France is no longer the military power it once was, and Russia has to struggle to get its own oil to market because of a ruined infrastructure.

For both the United States and allied democracies to manage their foreign affairs, they will have to cooperate more than the current U.S. government has. U.S. leftists and foreigners who find the Bush administration's unilateral approach problematic have been joined by the conservative *Business Week*, which criticizes the Bush administration for squandering the immense good will extended to the United States following 9/11:

A world that rallied to America's side in unprecedented demonstrations of support after Sept. 11 increasingly perceives the United States itself as a great danger to peace.

How did things come to this? The failure of the Bush Administration to manage its diplomacy is staggering, and the price paid, even if the war ends quickly [this was written in March 2003], could be higher than anyone now anticipates.

The political effect of this foreign policy imbroglio is already obvious. It can be measured in tattered alliances and global tensions, eroding support for President George W. Bush, and big changes throughout the Middle East. What remains unclear are the economic consequences. In the end, they may be far more significant. . . .

The Bush foreign policy of unilateral pre-emption is so ill-defined and open-ended that it could weigh heavily on the global economy well after the bombing stops.²⁴

President George W. Bush, unlike his father, has the reputation for not being politically sophisticated about foreign affairs and thus easily influenced. One criticism is that he has a quasi-religious sense of mission, much as Latter-day Saints do, although his religious roots are Southern Baptist. Thus, if this criticism is correct, it could simply be that those who have access to him find him easy to manipulate. Even those whom one would expect to defend the president fall into this camp at times. For instance, someone with impeccable ideological credentials, one would think, is David Frum, his former speechwriter, a Canadian right-wing journalist. He called Bush "impatient and quick to anger; sometimes glib,

24. Bruce Nussbaum, "Beyond the War—Mismanaging the Run-Up to War Will Do More than Squander Goodwill and Damage Alliances," *Business Week*, March 24, 2003.

even dogmatic; often uncurious and as a result ill informed.”²⁵ Such a judgment points to Bush being an “idealist” just as Carter and Wilson were “idealists.”

To sum up so far, those who oppose the second Gulf War believe that the U.S.’s foreign policy is driven by a combination of personal religious conviction to take democracy to the downtrodden Arabs and the undue influence of those close to Bush on his policy. Those for the war see the United States as liberating Iraq from a brutal tyrant who waged war on his own people and menaced the Middle East, the West, and indeed, the whole world. Part of this ideology is that since the United States happens to be in a position of power, it ought to—and usually does—act in the interests of righteousness.

The challenge facing the anti-war camp is to show that Bush is being manipulated or that his personal sense of mission is not in the best interests of the United States or the world. Fatal to the anti-war movement’s ideological assumptions would be Iraq’s rapid development into a democracy, following the model of occupied Japan and Germany after World War II. Iraq, as a secular country, has already promoted values that the West appreciates, such as literacy and the work ethic. More difficult would be the traditional lack of cooperation among Shi’ites, Marsh Arabs, Sunnis, various types of Kurds, Nestorian Christians, and so on. A similar problem proved to be Yugoslavia’s undoing once Marshall Tito’s strong rule was removed.

The challenge facing the pro-war camp is to show that unilateralism will produce more benign results than multilateralism and also that even well-intended current activities will not produce fatal “blowback.” The nightmare for this camp is that Pakistan might end up being the “next Iran.” With a hinterland out of control, an unstable neighbor (Afghanistan), a strong military, nuclear capability, and the rising power of Islamist fundamentalism, Pakistan could indeed become another Iran, one which has the atomic bomb and which threatens the world’s largest democracy (India).

25. David Frum, *The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York: Random House, 2003), quoted in an interview with David Frum by Elizabeth Wasserman, “The Real George Bush: David Frum, a Former Presidential Speechwriter and the Author of *The Right Man*, Gives an Inside Look at the Character of George W. Bush,” *Atlantic Monthly*, February 12, 2003. Also available on-line: http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/interviews/int_2003-02-12.htm.

How has the LDS Church reacted to these global tensions? Two recent statements shed light on the road the LDS Church may take. The first is an October conference 2002 address by Apostle Russell M. Nelson. The second was a short statement in March 2003 by Church President Gordon B. Hinckley.

In "Blessed Are the Peacemakers," Elder Nelson strongly condemned war, then continued:

[The scriptures] strongly condemn wars of aggression but sustain obligations of citizens to defend their families and their freedoms. Because "we believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law," members of this Church will be called into military service of many nations. . . . Because of the long history of hostility upon the earth, many feel that peace is beyond hope. I disagree. Peace is possible. We can learn to love our fellow human beings throughout the world. Whether they be Jewish, Islamic, or fellow Christians, whether Hindu, Buddhist, or other, we can live together with mutual admiration and respect, without forsaking our religious convictions. Things we have in common are greater than are our differences. Peace is a prime priority that pleads for our pursuit.²⁶

Elder Nelson then asserted, in language that sounded like a condemnation of the West's military action against Islamic countries:

Abraham's posterity has a divinely decreed potential. The Lord declared that Ishmael [the traditional ancestor of the Arabs] would become a great nation and that the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would bless all the nations of the earth.

So descendants of Abraham—entrusted with great promises of infinite influence—are in a pivotal position to emerge as peacemakers. Chosen by the Almighty, they can direct their powerful potential toward peace.

Resolution of present political problems will require much patience and negotiation. The process would be enhanced greatly if pursued prayerfully.²⁷

Five months later on March 19, 2003, President Gordon B. Hinckley spoke at Brigham Young University. The Church's media release said that no official statement on the war had been made except "this parenthetical statement of the Church president," which read:

26. Russell M. Nelson, "Blessed Are the Peacemakers," *Ensign*, November 2002, 39.

27. *Ibid.*

"It appears that the nation, of which most of us are citizens, is inexorably moving toward war. These are solemn and perilous times. If there be any of our number in the reserves or National Guard who have been called to duty, we extend our greatest appreciation and our love and respect to them and to the families they have left behind. We pray with earnestness and with faith that God will watch over them and preserve them and return them unharmed to those who love them most. In such times as this we feel the great inequality of sacrifice when men and women are called to active duty in behalf of the country.

"May those of us who are spared of such sacrifice never be proud or arrogant, but rather humbly grateful for those who lay their lives on the line in time of war."²⁸

Interestingly, given the opportunity to take a side, President Hinckley refused to do so. The statement contains no evaluation of whether the proposed U.S. action was morally right. It also indirectly clarified that Elder Nelson's talk should not be applied to any specific U.S. action. In fact, President Hinckley seemed aware of his two sometimes contradictory roles. As a growing force within the United States, the LDS Church plays a public role. President Hinckley, more than any previous president, acts as a statesman within the Church's host country. Simultaneously, because the Church now has a global presence, he must not be seen as taking sides on secular issues.

At the October general conference exactly a year earlier, President Hinckley said:

I have just been handed a note that says a U.S. missile attack is under way [against Afghanistan, aimed at dislodging the Taliban].

I need not remind you that we live in perilous times. I desire to speak concerning these times and our circumstances as members of this Church.

You are all acutely aware of the events of September 11, less than a month ago. Out of that vicious and ugly attack we are plunged into a state of war. It is the first war of the 21st century. The last century has been described as the most war-torn in human history. Now we are off on another dangerous undertaking, the unfolding of which and the end thereof we do not know. For the first time since we became a nation, the United States has been seriously attacked on its mainland soil. But this was not an attack on the United States alone. It was an attack on men and nations of good

28. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, news release, "Iraq War," March 19, 2003, retrieved in March 2003 from <http://www.lds.org/newsroom/showrelease/0,15503,4044-1-16065,00.html>.

will everywhere. It was well-planned, boldly executed, and the results were disastrous. It is estimated that more than 5,000 innocent people died. Among these were many from other nations. It was cruel and cunning, an act of consummate evil.²⁹

While rightly condemning the events of 9/11, he characterizes them as an attack, not just on the United States, but upon a greater polity, defined very generally. Then he became more specific about the nature of the war:

Now we are at war. Great forces are being mobilized and will continue to be. Political alliances are being forged. We do not know how long this conflict will last. We do not know what it will cost in lives and treasure. We do not know the manner in which it will be carried out. It could impact the work of the Church in various ways.

Our national economy has been made to suffer. It was already in trouble, and this has compounded the problem. Many are losing their employment. Among our own people this could affect Welfare needs, and also the tithing of the Church. It could affect our missionary program.

We are now a global organization. We have members in more than 150 nations. Administering this vast worldwide program could conceivably become more difficult.

Those of us who are American citizens stand solidly with the President of our nation. The terrible forces of evil must be confronted and held accountable for their actions. This is not a matter of Christian against Muslim. I am pleased to see that food is being dropped to the hungry people of a target nation. We value our Muslim neighbors across the world and hope that those who live by the tenets of their faith will not suffer. I ask particularly that our own people do not become a party in any way to the persecution of the innocent. Rather, let us be friendly and helpful, protective and supportive. It is the terrorist organizations that must be ferreted out and brought down.³⁰

President Hinckley thus simultaneously played the role of a domestic statesman who recognizes the duty of U.S. Latter-day Saints to support their government in general and the role of the leader of a worldwide church with members in many nations. In fact, he articulated the second role first by expressing concern for the effect of current affairs on the Church.

As a result, LDS ideologists on both sides have official support for

29. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Times in Which We Live," *Ensign*, November 2001, 72.

30. *Ibid.*

their points, but neither ideology can prevail based solely upon recent official statements. Thus, the Church seems to recognize that both it and the United States are, in their own respective ways, powerful organizations, and it is in the very essence of powerful organizations to have responsibilities and duties and also to face dangers. We start off the twenty-first century facing a very different enemy. The Church presents a bigger target to its enemies, and the United States is in a similar situation: damned by its critics if it does and damned by its critics if it doesn't. What seems clear, however, is that the United States cannot take LDS support for granted anymore, and U.S. Latter-day Saints will have to be very careful how they play their *Pax Americana* cards. Like ancient Rome, which enabled the growth of the primitive church but which eventually co-opted it for its own secular use, the United States is the primary vehicle for secular might two millennia later. It has and will continue to be the primary socio-political vehicle—for better or for worse—for the spread of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and it will be up to the Church to decide if, when, and how to avoid being co-opted by this new, albeit benign, imperium.

What will be the difference between U.S. Latter-day Saints and foreign Latter-day Saints in this situation? It seems that the Church will continue to encourage U.S. Latter-day Saints to support their country. The traditional nationalism, or ardent patriotism shown by U.S. Latter-day Saints, will continue unabated. But they are also free to form stances which oppose wars undertaken by the United States on the grounds that they are not necessarily "virtuous" wars. Members must make those decisions as individuals, but both sides will have sufficient religious iconography and texts upon which to build their cases.

What has suddenly changed, it seems, is that this freedom is now also open to foreign Latter-day Saints, who have traditionally suffered most from conflicts between their religious views, often communicated by U.S. leaders and missionaries, and their own sense of patriotism, world-views, and personal choices. A French or German Latter-day Saint will no longer feel pressured to support the U.S. position merely because it seems that the majority of U.S. Latter-day Saints seem to.

The German position on the invasion of Iraq was largely seen by pro-war factions in the United States as a matter of domestic politics, with Chancellor Gerhard Schröder running for re-election by appealing primarily to domestic doves. Many U.S. Americans see the French position

as a venal one, a version of the “argument for oil” outlined above. (In fact, Total, Elf, and other French companies had a significant stake in Iraq.) What is different now is that a German Latter-day Saint who takes a dovish position based on German domestic issues—such as coming to terms with its role in World War II, the consequences of which are still very much part of domestic German politics—is free to take such a position without having to answer charges that it is “non-Mormon” or “anti-gospel.” Likewise the French Latter-day Saint can remind her U.S. American counterpart that Total is no different than ExxonMobil.

For the first time since Vietnam, Canada did not officially back the United States in the Iraqi invasion. It did, however, provide behind-the-scenes support. Since the initial strikes against Afghanistan, Canada has supplied fourteen destroyers and frigates, a commodore command group to guard non-U.S./non-U.K. naval assets in the southern Gulf, and a heavy battalion of peacekeepers in Afghanistan, which freed up U.S. forces for Iraq. It has also committed approximately half a billion dollars in humanitarian aid for Afghanistan and remains open to supplying aid for Iraq through U.N. initiatives. Canada could thus continue to follow its traditional peacekeeping role without direct participation in a war in which it felt it had no direct interest.

Looking perhaps even further into the future, the eventual interests of Arab Latter-day Saints are being planned for. To many people, ISPART (the Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts; <http://ispart.byu.edu>) is better known as the parent organization of the apologetics group, FARMS (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies: <http://farms.byu.edu>). The institute is becoming increasingly involved in Middle Eastern studies, including Islamic studies. Informal contact between Arab countries and the Church through ISPART is quiet but on the increase, notably with Jordan but also with Iran and other Islamic countries.

Successfully separating the political stances of individuals and their contingent ideologies from idealist and realist meta-ideologies may have the long-term result of presenting the LDS Church as being one Christian group that Arabs and other Muslims can trust. That is, I speculate, a reasonable gamble for the Church’s ecclesiastical and academic leadership.