

Mormons and Foreign Policy

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General Omar Bradley once said of contemporary Americans, “We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount.” In a “world of nuclear giants and ethical infants,” he continued, “we know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.”¹ His concern over our society’s infatuation with the instruments of death rather than the conditions for peace is paralleled in the teachings of president Spencer W. Kimball. Addressing members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, President Kimball remarked sadly that “we are a warlike people” and warned against our tendency to turn to the false gods of armaments “for protection and deliverance.” He lamented that members of the Church “are easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord.”²

President Kimball’s statement, the scriptures, and the history of the restored Church suggest the importance of foreign affairs to the Church and its members. The Doctrine and Covenants is quite explicit about the matter: It is “expedient for you to understand . . . things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms” (D&C 88:78–79). This paper presents some introductory thoughts on several themes involving the Church and foreign policy, particularly (though not exclusively) U.S. foreign policy. It will no doubt conclude with more questions than answers. This essay is therefore by no means definitive in its development of the issues, its analysis, or its prescriptions; rather, it is a general statement and is intended as an invitation to others to address these important questions.

The Gospel and Foreign Policy

Insofar as the scriptures are concerned, there can be no debate about the relative merits of war and peace. Satan is the father of contention; Christ is the Prince of Peace. Nephi foresaw that there would be “wars and rumors of wars among all the nations”. (1 Ne. 11:16); the Doctrine and Covenants states that in the last days “it [Zion] shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another” (D&C 45:69). Both prophecy and scriptural injunction—“therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace” (D&C 98: 16)—make it clear that the followers of Christ are to endorse and seek peace.

Indeed, this is one of the precepts Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9).

Yet the clear waters of peace-seeking are muddied by modern-day life. For “the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion” (D&C 1:35). The international reality of power politics is paralleled by the domestic and individual reality that everyone lives within the boundaries and under the jurisdiction of one or another of the world’s nations. There are, as a result, responsibilities and duties incumbent upon each of us, as taught by Paul and summarized in the twelfth article of faith: “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” Generally, members of the Church are obligated by the tenets of their faith and the responsibilities of their citizenship to support the foreign policies of their countries. This obligation includes the responsibility to support foreign policies which uphold the legitimate interests of their country, including those interests which may require defending through a just war.

The key words here are *legitimate* and *just*. Unfortunately, there are times when it is difficult to determine when a foreign policy is legitimate and when a war is just. But it is not impossible for a war to be just. There are scores of scriptural examples of righteous peoples successfully defending their homelands from aggression, for example.³ Members of the Church, then, are expected to search for a clarification of these points and to arrive at an understanding of the issues. They are expected to pursue a course consistent with the tenets of their faith and the laws which govern their citizenship. This question of individual responsibility will be discussed in more detail later.

The Church and the Security of the United States

There are several reasons the security of the United States is important to all Church members. First, the Book of Mormon and historic pronouncements by Church leaders proclaim the United States a promised land in which important events in the religious history of the world were and are to occur.⁴ Second, the gospel was restored and developed as a religious institution in the United States. Third, the United States is the domicile of many Church members and their institutions. The headquarters of the Church, most of its leadership, and much of its financial support are within the United States. Fourth, the Constitution of the United States is believed by Mormons to have been authored by inspired men and its government divinely instituted (see D&C 101:77), providing an early sanctuary for the Church and its members to pursue their own interests. Also,

many Mormons believe that certain of the principles found in the Constitution are universal (see D&C 98:5). Fifth, a religiously tolerant and strong United States has enabled the Church to prosper at home and to pursue its proselyting interests abroad, Church leaders often speak of this special mission to preach the gospel in every nation and to every culture. With reference to the changing structure of the international system and the role of the Church, President Kimball said, “The Spirit of the Lord is brooding over the nations to prepare the way for the preaching of the gospel. . . . Some political events,” he added, “have a bearing upon the spread of the truth. It seems as though the Lord is moving upon the affairs of men and nations.”⁵

This fundamental missionary interest of the Church is served by an exemplary America pursuing a foreign policy based on the principles of the Constitution of the United States and George Washington’s Farewell Address—a foreign policy which emphasizes nonintervention in the domestic affairs of other states, national self-determination of peoples everywhere, and international stability and peace; a foreign policy which seeks to resolve international disputes through mediation, adjudication, and other forms of diplomacy; a foreign policy which turns to coercive forms of diplomacy only as a last resort and only when national security is in peril. A free, secure, and exemplary United States means a free and secure Church. Thus, to support foreign policies which insure both the security of the United States and its behavior as an exemplary international role model is not only a civic duty for Latter-day Saints in the United States but is an obligation of Church members everywhere.

Unfortunately, at times the United States has not lived up to such high standards. There have been foreign policies and instances of international behavior which have not been “legitimate” or “just.” In such cases, Church members everywhere have a civic and sacred duty to raise their voices in opposition. They may in fact be obligated to do something about it in an active and legal way. Again, the question of individual responsibility of Church members in the foreign policy arena will be discussed later.

The Church and Peacetime Foreign Policy

The Church does not often speak directly on foreign policy issues but this does not mean the Church is not involved. The Church has day-to-day involvement in foreign affairs, most of which can be described as non-governmental or “private” foreign relations. The Church is therefore an actor in the international system, but it is not politically sovereign. Unlike the Vatican, it does not maintain its own secretary of state and professional foreign service. It is, rather, a private international institution with its own “foreign policy” specialists who function daily within the context of a complex network of global relationships, both public and private.

The Church is daily involved with such matters as the international transfer of persons, money, information, and institutions. The Presiding Bishopric's Office, the Church Educational System, and the International Mission are three Church institutions involved in the political, economic, and social structures of the international system. For example, the daily functioning of the international Mission regarding such matters as passport and visas, personal security measures, and financial and information transfers are all matters that can easily go unnoticed.

As previously noted, a major international function of the Church is its missionary effort, and in times of peace the Church works to alleviate diplomatic and political barriers to proselytizing. Indeed, one of the major pragmatic reasons the Church opposes warfare is the attendant effects on the missionary effort. On the simplest level, the more nations that maintain positive diplomatic and economic ties with the United States, the more nations that are open to the proselytizing efforts of American elders and sister missionaries. However, in order to alleviate the dependency of the Church's proselytizing efforts on the current status of U.S. foreign relations, Church policy is to encourage non-American members to serve as missionaries within their own countries. To date, however, using local missionaries is practical in only a small portion of the world; there continues to be a great reliance on American missionaries—and therefore a great vulnerability to the United States' diplomatic posture.

Another equally important international function of the Church is its obligation to care for the institutional development of the Church abroad. The Church not only has missions abroad but also stakes, temples, and other properties which require a Church "foreign policy" nor inconsistent with American foreign policy.

Thus far, we have discussed the Church's peacetime foreign policy goals and the rather unobtrusive ways the Church promotes them. There are times, however, when the Church will take a controversial position on a major political issue. Examples include the First Presidency statements on universal military training after World War II and, more recently, on the deployment of the MX missile.⁶ In both cases, Church leaders expressed opposition to policies they perceived as neither in the best interest of the nation nor the Church. Such instances are rare, however; Church leaders generally express their peacetime foreign policy views on an individual basis or work as a unit behind the scenes.

The Church and War

The occasions when the Church is vocal on foreign policy issues, even becoming an active participant, are characteristically periods of national crisis. In particular, there have been a number of official Church declarations

concerning specific wars. The Mexican-American War, for example, was the first major foreign policy issue that leaders of the restored Church confronted. The *Millennial Star* spoke of “the long reign of intolerance that has darkened the dominions of Mexico,” declaring that Mexico “must receive a fatal blow from American arms.”⁷ But the same publication also spoke of an American “lust of dominion” while “grasp [ing]” for wide expanses of Mexican territory.⁸ Apparently in the Mormon community as in the rest of the country, patriotic fervor was combating moral abhorrence of wars of aggression. The motivation of the Mormon recruits who fought in the war was probably as much pragmatic Church self-interest as patriotism.⁹ As for their conduct, these recruits were counseled by Parley P. Pratt to neither “misuse their enemies” nor “spoil their property.”¹⁰

The Spanish-American War brought considerable discourse from Church leaders. Most Mormons, like most Americans, were caught up in the emotions of the times. However, President George Q. Cannon said that we should not “indulge in warlike demonstrations. . . . We should be . . . seeking peace, and endeavoring to escape all the horrors of war.” Speaking of the McKinley administration and war, President Cannon expressed admiration for the desire of the White House “to push off war and do all in their power to avert it.” He further said, “Spain has not yet proclaimed war against this nation. . . . The Lord says we should lift up a standard of peace.” On the eve of the war, President Cannon continued to urge peace, quoting Joseph Smith: “We must proclaim peace; do all in our power to appease the wrath of our enemies; make any sacrifice that honorable people can to avert war.”¹¹ Apostle Francis M. Lyman said, “Pray for it, live for it, and do everything on earth for peace that is honorable before we engage in war.”¹²

It is clear that Church leaders urged peacemaking as a national policy, however, once America declared war, the Church leaders issued a statement calling for the membership to support the national effort, and even “telegraphed local [Church] leaders to encourage troop enlistment.”¹³ Why the change? There are two possible explanations, Church leaders may have become convinced that there were sufficiently “just” reasons for intervention, or perhaps the Church determined that once Congress had declared war it became an obligation of citizenship to support the nation in the conflict.

When World War I was triggered at Sarajevo, Church leaders fully supported Woodrow Wilson’s policy of neutrality and believed the war to be “without adequate cause” and “the supreme crime of all history.”¹⁴ But once America entered the war, President Joseph F. Smith urged members to respond to their country’s call. Nevertheless, he severely chastised participants of all countries, saying, God “is working with men who never prayed, men who have never known God, nor Jesus Christ. . . . God is dealing with

nations of infidels,”¹⁵ strongly suggesting that despite Church members’ duty to support their respective countries, the war itself was unjustified.

In the final analysis, however, World War I became for most Latter-day Saints what it was to most Americans—a moral crusade.¹⁶ Heber J. Grant of the Council of the Twelve spoke of Mormons being engaged in a “war of righteousness.”¹⁷ Apostle B. H. Roberts said, “We fight not that war might be perpetuated, but that war might eternally cease upon the face of the earth. . . . Can you name a more righteous war than that?”¹⁸ Orson F. Whitney thanked God “that our boys have the privilege of participating in this glorious strife” and said, “God bless America in her heaven appointed task of . . . keeping alive the fires of freedom, and maintaining the rights of man!”¹⁹

Yet during World War I, Mormons continued to support a foreign policy based on “renouncing war and proclaiming peace,” since most members (along with most Americans) believed it was a war to end all wars. B. H. Roberts said the conflict promised to “end all wars” after which “there shall come world peace, and the earth shall rest.”²⁰ However, the political decisions at Versailles rendered these promises meaningless.

In the 1930s, disillusionment with the “fruits” of World War I was perhaps greater among Mormon leaders than among most Americans. Heber J. Grant, President of the Church, changed from an advocate of the “war to end all wars” to a skeptic over the value of “just wars.” Church leaders, like many Americans, spoke of “lessons learned” from World War I, supported America’s neutrality acts, and condemned World War I as a tragic misadventure. “Never again,” leaders resolved in the *Deseret News*.²¹ To some, even the Munich Agreement seemed justified appeasement. And when war did break out again in Europe, Mormon leaders were skeptical. The First Presidency said, “Each side claims to believe it is in the right.”²² J. Reuben Clark, himself a member of the Church’s First Presidency, even doubted if the attack on Poland were adequate reason for Britain and France to declare war on Germany. President Clark believed that America could best proclaim its mission by “moral example,” by not fighting. Other Church leaders suggested that should America go to war Church members might want to “exercise the right of conscientious objection.”²³ After Pearl Harbor, however, the Church gave its full support for America’s entry into the war. Nevertheless, the Church continued to decry the institution of war itself. With its statement on war, the First Presidency announced that “the Church is and must be against war. . . . It cannot regard war as a righteous means of settling international disputes; these could and should be settled—the nations agreeing—by peaceful negotiation and adjustment.”²⁴

With the defeat of fascism and the dramatic rise of communism following World War II, Mormon leaders became alarmed by “communism on the march” and gave their support to America’s Cold War policies of

containment. Yet while President Clark warned against militarism and internationalism that could lead us beyond our exemplary role, President McKay spoke of an international role for America. President McKay saw the Korean War as a justified effort to contain the spread of communism; President Clark viewed the war as unconstitutional. Both condemned communism with vigor, but they often disagreed on American foreign policy and techniques of containment.

While there was little enthusiasm for the Korean War, Church members generally responded to the demand for their participation as yet another civic duty. The Vietnam War, however, was more puzzling to Mormons. The containment of Communist aggression in Vietnam was much less clear and the barbarity of the war far more obvious. The war gave rise to increasing pacifism and political dissent across the United States. As in Korea, most Mormons served as called upon, although some members became conscientious objectors. Church leaders reminded the membership of their “civic duty,” yet acknowledged that individual members might become conscientious objectors, not by virtue of Church membership, but because of personal conscience.²⁵

During the Vietnam War the Church reaffirmed its support of a foreign policy which “renounced war and proclaimed peace.” In 1968, Elder Boyd K. Packer called war “a heinous, hideous, ugly thing” and referred to the 1942 First Presidency statement, which states that “the Church is and must be against war. . . . It cannot regard war as a righteous means of settling disputes. . . . [There should be] peaceful negotiations.”²⁶ Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, a frequent visitor to the horrors of Vietnam, was even more emphatic: “War I hate with all its mocking pageantry. It is a grim living testimony that Satan lives. It is the earth’s greatest cause of human misery, destroyer of lives, promoter of hate and waster of treasure. . . . It is man’s greatest folly, his most tragic misadventure.”²⁷ On Memorial Day, 1971, President Harold B. Lee reaffirmed the 1942 First Presidency statement. He concluded, “The true Christian’s position on war is clearly set forth by a declaration in which the Lord says, ‘Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace.’²⁸ Following the previously established pattern, however, President Lee followed his condemnation of war by encouraging Church members to serve their respective countries if required to do so. The perplexing dichotomy of condemning war as an institution while urging citizens to support their respective nations continued.

Political Debate within the Church Community

American Latter-day Saints differ little from most of their fellow citizens on U.S. foreign policy preferences. Historically, some have been isolationists and others internationalists. This was evident during the League of

Nations debate within the Church and later during the Clark and McKay pronouncements on foreign relations in the 1940s and 1950s. With reference to the global mission of the Church, Mormons have always been internationalists. But with reference to American foreign policy, they have stood at different points along the isolationist—internationalist continuum. Today, few, if any, Church leaders could be characterized as isolationists. Most agree that America must accept responsibility for at least some of the direction of international affairs on a worldwide scale. But they are not necessarily inclined to support diplomacy which could be considered coercive. Almost all agree that communism is a danger in the world; most feel that the United States must use its influence to counter the spread of Communist institutions. And because the Soviet Union spearheads the Communist challenge, members tend to accept the notion that America must respond to the expansion of Soviet influence. But within these broad parameters, considerable room is left for debate. Even the parameters themselves are beginning to shift. This is particularly true as the Church expands its borders into Communist and Socialist nations, where Church members are again expected to “honor, obey, and sustain the law” of their respective countries.

There is considerable speculation as to where Mormon leaders, individually and as a group, stand on the contemporary foreign relations of the United States. Church leaders rarely speak on the specifics: balance of payments deficits, the nuclear freeze, normalization of relations with China, human rights in the Third World, Israeli troops in Lebanon, martial law in Poland, Communist guerrillas in El Salvador, and so forth. But this does not mean that the Church is not interested or that it is not involved. The Church is very much interested in the outcome of these affairs and is privately concerned and involved on a day-to-day basis as it endeavors to pursue its own foreign policy and to look after its members’ interests globally.

We need only consider a few examples to see the very real concern the Church has regarding international relations. To imagine, for example, that the Church is not interested in events in Central America is absurd. The Church has missions, even stakes of Zion, in Central America. Its institutions and membership in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua are being affected adversely by the region’s instability. A peaceful settlement which assures stability and the opportunity for the Church to pursue its mission in that region of the world is of utmost concern. Likewise, peace and stability in the Middle East are also in the best interest of the Church. A political settlement which would assure the legitimacy of Jewish and Palestinian rights would be very desirable for the Church. As is the case in other conflict areas of the world, the Church supports an American foreign policy based on peaceful negotiations and diplomacy. Likewise, the Church

is very concerned with Polish internal affairs. The Church has recently been established in Poland. It is officially recognized by the present government, which, if totally subordinated to the Soviet Union, might terminate this recognition. In recent years, through the quiet diplomacy of a special representative of the Church, better relations have been established with a number of governments formerly hostile to the Church and its interests, including Greece, China, Portugal, and Poland. Truly, for the first time in its modern history, the Church is global not only in intent but in reality.

The question of American East-West policy arises. An ongoing best suits the needs of the Church in the present era—accommodation or containment. Both schools of thought point to empirical, historical evidence to support their position. For example, the advocates of containment refer to the Korean War as an event in American foreign relations which had enormous impact on Church interests abroad, illustrating the positive effect American response to Soviet policies has on the Church. American containment of Communist aggression in Korea provided an opportunity for the Church to establish itself in South Korea. The fortunate conversion of a prominent Korean and the presence of many Mormon servicemen led to many conversions and the establishment of Church institutions. Today, the Church has thirteen stakes of Zion, three missions, and a temple in South Korea. But the failure of American foreign policy in Indochina was disastrous to Church interests in Vietnam. The Communist victory in South Vietnam meant the denial of the opportunities for the Church to become firmly established there. Today, Vietnamese membership in the Church is mostly limited to refugees in America, and there is little or no opportunity for the Church to pursue its mission in Vietnam itself. Thus, Communist wars and revolutions have (in these two instances) had significant impact on Church interests. The proponents of containment therefore assume that the Church is or ought to be greatly interested in an effective American response to war and revolution anywhere in the world.

On the other hand, those who favor accommodation with the East point out that deteriorating U.S.—Soviet relations have led to difficulties for Church members throughout Eastern Europe and Latin America. As previously noted, Church membership in Eastern bloc nations changes the foreign policy negotiating stance of the Church. In fact, improving U.S. relations with the Communist nation of mainland China may ultimately result in LDS missionaries' access to that nation's one billion inhabitants, in great measure fulfilling the prophecy that the gospel must be shared with every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. The advocates of accommodation therefore conclude that this approach is the most functional policy, given current global realities.

In fact, most Church leaders, like most Church members, are not very doctrinaire in their approach to foreign affairs, adopting neither a purely accommodative nor containment stance. Rather, they pragmatically examine each case in light of changing circumstances to determine the best way to further the work of the Lord on the earth. Generally, the only position they consistently assume is opposition to war and coercion as means of resolving international disputes.

In recent years, the nuclear arms race has been the single most important foreign policy issue in official Church pronouncements. Few foreign policy issues have received so much attention in the Church press. The original clear expression of concern about this matter, a First Presidency Message by President Kimball, appeared in the June 1976 issue of the *Ensign*. He spoke of Latter-day Saints, on the whole, as “an idolatrous people—a condition most repugnant to the Lord”—because they worship the false gods of armaments. “We are a warlike people,” he said. “We commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. . . . When threatened, we become antienemy instead of pro-kingdom of God.”²⁹

This warning by the prophet about the false gods of armaments was followed by several official statements denouncing the nuclear arms race. In their 1980 Christmas Message, the First Presidency said: “We are dismayed by the growing tensions among the nations, and the unrestricted building of arsenals of war, including huge and threatening nuclear weaponry.” In their statement, they discussed the destructive qualities of nuclear war and expressed their confidence in a foreign policy based on reason. While they recognized the need for America to have sufficient strength to repel any aggressor, they continued to reiterate the requirements of a foreign policy which would “renounce war and proclaim peace.” “We call upon the heads of nations,” the message continued, “to sit down and reason together in good faith to resolve their differences.” They expressed confidence in diplomacy and the negotiating process, which could “save the world from a holocaust.”³⁰ In their 1981 Easter Message the First Presidency warned again of unceasing global tensions and the escalation of arms. They urged American and other world leaders (the Soviets) to resolve their differences through negotiations.³¹ The most dramatic and certainly the most influential pronouncement of Church leaders for American foreign relations was the MX statement issued on 5 May 1981.³² It was influential because the Pentagon’s location and basing mode for the MX had yet to be (and is still not) resolved. The MX will not be deployed in Utah, and the First Presidency position is that it should not be deployed in other areas where the lives of people are endangered. The MX statement again expressed the deep concern Church leaders have about the arms race.

The First Presidency deplored nuclear weapon proliferation and remarked on the dangers of the MX missile to world security. Once again they clearly advocated an end to the arms race and urged negotiations. This is probably the single most significant example of the Church leadership's impact on national security policy in recent history.

However, Church interest in arms control did not come about with the advent of nuclear weapons. Church leaders have had a historic interest in the elimination or control of the "instruments of death." President Brigham Young said nations which manufacture weapons eventually use them. "A large share of the ingenuity of the world is taxed to invent weapons of war. What a set of fools!"³³ During the arms race at the turn of the century, Brigham Young urged world leaders to disband their armies and turn their "weapons of strife into implements of industry."³⁴ World War I, President Joseph F. Smith concluded, showed that peace does not come from preparation for war, as popularly assumed. B. H. Roberts, in a general conference address during the Washington Conference on Disarmament, said, "The old theory used to be that in order to preserve peace you must be prepared for war. The years between August, 1914, and the eleventh day of November, 1918, demonstrated the fallacy of that theory." He spoke of the "folly . . . of armaments" competition and saw the limitation of armaments at the Washington Conference as "an indication that the Spirit of the Lord is working in the hearts of . . . statesmen."³⁵ President Clark participated personally in the disarmament negotiations. Throughout his career as a public servant and Church leader, he remained a strong advocate of disarmament, calling upon the heads of nations to sit down together in good faith to resolve their differences. President Clark felt so strongly about the evils of an arms race that he urged the need to "reach a mutual live-and-let-live" understanding with the Soviet Union. He argued that the right course for the United States is to "honestly strive for peace and quit sparring for military advantage."³⁶

Individual Responsibility

The principle of free agency lies at the very heart of Mormon doctrine. The entire purpose of earthly existence, according to Latter-day Saint belief, is to provide individuals with the opportunity to develop wise judgment. "Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves" (D&C 58:27–28). Ethical decision making is thus a divine imperative as well as a practical necessity of social existence. Man's moral relationship to the state, particularly in time of war, constitutes a crucial test of this moral capacity. Loyalties to self, state, fellow human beings, and even God are

tried and tested. And, as is typically the case with such earthly trials, Latter-day Saints believe that God has not seen fit to “command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant” (D&C 58:26). In other words, members of the Church believe they should not expect the solution to temporal dilemmas to be handed to them. Nevertheless, broad gospel guidelines are available to supplement the process of prayerful and studious consideration of possible alternatives.

As we mentioned earlier in this text, there is general agreement among the scriptures, ancient and modern, as well as policy statements of the restored Church, that there are “just” and “unjust” wars. In the first case, citizens are obliged to support the war efforts of their respective states.” (Governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man,” states the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 131:1; see also Romans. 13:1), and faithful Latter-day Saints are encouraged to “honor, obey, and sustain the law”—including martial law. It is the Church’s policy to encourage its members to be good citizens of whichever nation they are part of. But it is the responsibility of individual members of America or any nation to discern between just and unjust war. Church members are expected to study and pray in order to reach a decision acceptable to God. But what are the religious and civic duties of an individual Mormon who has become convinced his nation is engaged in an unjust war or conflict?

In a representative democracy such as the United States, members of the Church normally have three legal options when confronted with a war they believe may be unjust: they can support the war-making effort anyway and transfer the moral culpability to the state; they can vocally and constitutionally oppose the war; or they can find ways of “sitting out” the war. Let us consider each of these alternatives individually.

There is a belief shared by many Church members that the war-making decision is a prerogative of the state and that it is the duty of the citizen to support the government in whatever military policy decisions it reaches. In other words, the duty of the citizen is to the state, and the ultimate moral responsibility for war-making rests with the nation’s leaders. A casual or selective reading of Church policy statements and the writings of the General Authorities might lead one to believe that this is unequivocally the official policy of the Church. But in a republic founded upon liberal democratic principles such as our own, this position is highly problematic. Since we believe that the moral authority of our government is derived from the consent of the governed, and that this is a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” it is doubtful that the people can effectively abdicate all moral responsibility for the government’s decisions, particularly crucial life-and-death decisions. After all, according to the Doctrine and Covenants, the United States Constitution was founded for

the express purpose “that every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him” (D&C 101:78).

On the other hand, it is not any more reasonable to believe that the responsibility for the behavior of a state acting within the international system rests fully upon the shoulders of each individual citizen. Instead it is a question of degree, wherein the individual Church member must decide for himself whether the action or policy of his nation is so reprehensible that actively supporting such a policy would constitute a moral offense.

The second option available to faithful Saints is to exercise their Constitutional freedoms of speech, press, and assembly to express their dissatisfaction with the nation’s policy. Although such behavior can become “unpatriotic,” it is not inherently so. In fact, often great, honorable Americans have felt obliged to stand up against what they perceived as deviations from America’s special moral role in the international community, despite the excitement and jingoism of the times. Such was the case with Abraham Lincoln, who protested the United States’ declaration of war on Mexico in 1846. Motivation is therefore the key by which to judge the appropriateness of such actions. Protesting a particular foreign policy, including the decision to go to war, can certainly be patriotic if the fundamental motivation consists of the desire to protect and preserve the best interests of one’s nation.

Although the option of protesting the foreign policy of one’s nation can be pursued in principle either as a private citizen or as a member of the armed forces, the practical restriction of individual and civil rights in the latter case may severely impede any effective expression of dissenting opinion. However, if an individual finds a particular war to be objectionable, he can generally opt to serve in some kind of support position, such as the medical or engineering corps where he will aid his country without personally contributing to the destruction of his nation’s adversary. Although sometimes dangerous, in certain cases this kind of assignment may provide a morally acceptable position for members of the Church who would otherwise be troubled by more direct involvement.

The final option available to Latter-day Saints who are opposed to their nation’s martial conduct is to legally “sit out” the war. For American citizens, there have been two chief ways to pursue this course: flight from the country or legal conscientious objector status. The former case seems a clear instance of rejection of the Church mandate to honor, obey, and sustain the law unless the individual actually renounces citizenship and seeks permanent residence in another nation. Obtaining conscientious objector status is quite another matter. To exercise this legal right is consistent with both domestic law and Church guidelines for individual members.

Conclusion

America is required to participate in an international system where power is valued and conflict is normal; indeed, all nations within the system seek power in the name of peace. Historically, the Church has remained aloof from power politics. The Church deplores foreign policies which employ the instruments of coercion and violence, and it condemns violent revolution and war except in the most extreme circumstances. The Church seeks peace and order, not war and anarchy, and therefore encourages its members to support a foreign policy based on peace. It was in this tradition that a 1983 Deseret News editorial proclaimed that the U.S. Senate should approve the establishment of a Peace Academy. Such an academy was initially a Peace Academy is “an idea whose time finally ought to have come.” The article quoted Senator Spark M. Matsunaga of Hawaii: “We have military academies to which we send . . . the finest of our youngsters to learn the art of war . . . but peacemaking is as much an art to be learned as war.”³⁷ Does this mean the debate on the Church’s position on foreign policy and war is over? Of course not. The Deseret News editorial is only one of the latest entrants in the continuing dialogue concerning the future of the nation and the international system. All converts to the gospel of Jesus Christ have peace as their ultimate foreign policy objective; the debate persists about how best to achieve that goal.

Such discussion is not new to the Church community, as references to the controversies surrounding the formation of the League of Nations, the United Nations, and the MX missile have made clear. It is in the best tradition of democratic political systems to disagree, discuss, and finally reach a consensus on such matters. It is also in the best tradition of revealed religion. Nowhere else, except in the home, do the principles of obedience and agency, social responsibility and religious duty interplay more actively than in the political arena. Church members are enjoined by scripture and their prophets to be good citizens, to vote according to their conscience during elections, and to participate in the political process. To limit such participation to Latter-day Saints are enjoined by God to be knowledgeable about “things abroad.” To be peacemakers they must be knowledgeable about “wars and the perplexities of nations.” They are likewise enjoined by scripture to be “anxiously engaged” in the cause of peace. Our constitutional system requires citizen participation in all its affairs, including foreign relations, if the promises of both the founding fathers and the scriptures are to be fulfilled. The proper concern of Latter-day Saints is therefore not that the debate end but that all participate and exercise their capacity as wise moral agents, “free to choose for themselves.”

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1. Omar Bradley, cited in Louis Fischer, *The Life Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 349.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign* 2 (June 1976): 6; see D&C 98:16.
3. Consider the righteous people of Ammon. In the book of Alma, they are protected by the Nephites from a massive Lamanite attack (chap. 27–28); a similar instance is recorded in chapter 43, and in chapter 53 their faithful sons serve under Helaman's command.
4. See 1 Nephi 13:30. There are many other such references in the Book of Mormon, including 1 Ne. 12–14, 10:13, 22:12; 2 Ne. 9:2; 3 Ne. 20:29.
5. Address by President Spencer W. Kimball to Regional Representatives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 29 September 1978.
6. "Letter of the First Presidency Concerning Military Training," *Improvement Era* 49 (February 1946): 76–77, and "First Presidency Statement on Basing of the MX Missile," *Ensign* 11 (June 1981): 76.
7. *Millennial Star* 9 (15 June 1847): 187.
8. *Millennial Star* 9 (1 March 1847): 73.
9. See Ronald W. Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers and the State: Mormon Leaders Respond to the Dilemmas of War," *Sunstone* 7 (July–August 1982): 46; see also James B. Allen and Glen Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1976), 226–30.
10. As quoted in Hosea Stout, *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844–1861*, ed. Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 1:179. Thus, Church leaders became willing participants in an American war of aggression. J. Reuben Clark later referred to this war as not having "shed any great credit on us" (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "Our Dwindling Sovereignty," University of Utah in 1952 and reprinted in *Stand Fast by our Constitution* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, Co., 1962], 96).
11. George Q. Cannon, in Conference Report, Spring 1898, 85–87; cited in Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers and the State," 48.
12. Francis M. Lyman, in Conference Report, Spring 1898, 58.
13. The Church-administered ZCMI department store allegedly offered half-pay for the war's duration to employees who volunteered. Utah was one of the first states to fill its initial quota of recruits (Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers and the State," 48–50, nn. 61 and 62).
14. Salt Lake *Herald*, 11 August 1914, cited in Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers and the State," 49.
15. James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of The First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 5:71; cited in Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers and the State," 49.
16. The Church even expended some of its own funds for Liberty Bonds. By the end of the war, Utah had over eighteen thousand enlisted men under arms (Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers and the State," 49–50, nn. 75 and 76).
17. Heber J. Grant, in Conference Report, Spring 1918, 24. 18 B. H. Roberts, in Conference Report, Fall 1917, 103.
18. B. H. Roberts, in Conference Report, Fall 1917, 103.

19. Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Fall 1918, 43-44; cited in Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers and the State," 50.
20. B. H. Roberts, in Conference Report, October 1916, 143; cited in Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers and the State," 50-51.
21. "Potentialities of War," *Deseret News*, 14 September 1937, 4; cited in Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers and the State," 50-51.
22. Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers and the State," 51, n. 93.
23. Richard L. Evans, in Conference Report, April 1941, 52; cited in Walker, "Sheaves, Bucklers and the State," 51.
24. "Message of the First Presidency to the Members of the Church," Conference Report, 5 April 1942, 94; also in *Improvement Era* 45 (May 1942): 348.
25. See Joseph Anderson letter, 20 March 1970, in Gordon C. Thomasson, *War, Conscription, Conscience and Mormonism* (Santa Barbara: Mormon Heritage, 1972), 6.
26. Boyd K. Packer, "The Member and the Military," Conference Report, 5 April 1968, 34-35; also in *Improvement Era* 71 (June 1968): 60.
27. Gordon B. Hinckley, BYU Forum Address, *Daily Universe*, 11 November 1970, 3.
28. Harold B. Lee, "From the Valley of Despair to the Peaks of Hope," *New Era* 1 (August 1971): 4.
29. First Presidency Message, *Ensign* 6 (June 1976): 6.
30. "Christmas Message from the First Presidency," *Church News*, 20 December 1980, 3.
31. "LDS Leaders Say Peace within Reach," *Deseret News*, 17 April 1981, A1-A2.
32. "First Presidency Statement on Basing of the MX Missile," 76.
33. *Journal of Discourses*, 10 February 1861, 26 vols. (Liverpool: William Budge, 1854-86), 8:324-25.
34. James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:334.
35. B. H. Roberts, in Conference Report, Fall 1921, 195-96.
36. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "Let Us Have Peace," *Stand Fast by Our Constitution*, 70, 76, 78.
37. "Senators, Stop Stalling on Peace Bill," *Deseret News*, 17 July 1983, A19.