

War Is Eternal: The Case for Military Preparedness

Robert M. Hogge

“Perpetual peace is possible but . . .”

—Count Pierre Bezákhov, Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*

THE HISTORY OF EMPIRES and nation-states is often a chronicle of wars, as this sprinkling of names clearly evokes: Ghengis Khan, Attila the Hun, Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte, William T. Sherman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Fidel Castro, and Ho Chi Minh. The twentieth century, the bloodiest and most war-crazed in the history of the world,¹ has alone been responsible for combat in which “not less than 62 million civilians have perished, nearly 20 million more than the 43 million military personnel killed.”²

Enumerating deaths caused by war in the single decade of the 1990s creates a litany singularly grim: Sudan (1.5 million); Rwanda (800,000);

ROBERT M. HOGGE, former president of the Association for Mormon Letters and a retired career officer in the U.S. Air Force, is an English professor at Weber State University. He is an aficionado of the literature of war and has published essays, reviews, poetry, and fiction in a variety of journals, including the *Hemingway Review*, *Aeronautics Digest*, *Air University Review*, *Weber Studies*, and *BYU Studies*. Recently released as temple workers, he and his wife Jan now team-teach the marriage and family relations class in their ward in Layton, Utah.

1. Ironically Alfred B. Nobel (1833-96), Swedish chemist and philanthropist, contributed to this dubious distinction with his invention of dynamite.

2. Chris Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), 13. Hedges has been a foreign correspondent for fifteen years and

Angola (500,000); Bosnia (250,000); Guatemala (200,000); Liberia (150,000); Burunia (250,000); and Algeria (75,000) along with untold tens of thousands in the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.³ Then there are Colombia, Israel/Palestine, Chechnya, Sri Lanka, south-eastern Turkey, Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Iraq. And war continues unabated during the first decade of the twenty-first century. I list the names of historical warriors, numbers of casualties, and recent areas of brutal conflict to demonstrate that war has always been with us and shows no sign of abating.

Although I love peace and have great sympathy for pacifists such as the Quakers, I don't believe they can achieve their hoped for Edenic ideal in the world as we now know it. Though you might logically or emotionally seek to discount war's omnipresence, it is nonetheless real; historian Will Durant "calculated that there have only been twenty-nine years in all of human history during which a war was not underway somewhere."⁴ The nature of war itself, senseless, brutal, and often unprovoked, convinces me that perpetual peace is not even remotely possible. In fact, a nation-state's military preparedness, either singly or in coalitions, and its ability to deter would-be aggressors are absolute prerequisites for survival, let alone for any hoped-for incremental progress towards world peace.

In our time, the U.S. military's greatest legacy to the American people is that no aggressor nation has successfully attacked and occupied the mainland of the United States. Many of the Latter-day Saint military men and women I have worked with attribute our favorable position in this war-plagued world both to the theory of deterrence, peace through military and economic strength, and even more to the hand of God. As journalist Chris Hedges reminds us: "Civil war, brutality, ideological intolerance, conspiracy, and murderous repression are part of the human condition—in-deed almost the daily fare for many but a privileged minority."⁵ Because of

recently received the 2002 Amnesty International Global Award for Human Rights Journalism. His book is reviewed in this issue.

3. *Ibid.*, 13.

4. Quoted in *ibid.*, 10.

5. *Ibid.*, 13.

the grace of God and our military preparedness, we Americans are now that privileged minority.

World history is rife with examples of city-states, clans, races, or nation-states overrun because they were not prepared militarily. Let me focus first, in some detail, on two millennia-long conflicts that are still with us in the twenty-first century: Chinese-backed “liberation” movements and the Arab/Israeli conflict. Then I’ll analyze forms of pacifism, showing why each one can never lead to perpetual peace.

First, the “China Connection.” After two world wars, the still unresolved Korean War became the first test case between two opposing ideologies and mindsets: the United Nations’ “peacekeepers” led by U.S. military forces and Asian “people’s liberation forces” backed by the Chinese. On June 25, 1950, the North Korean Democratic People’s Army invaded, crushing South Korean defenses and entering Seoul, all in the space of three days. The North Korean leaders commanded their military forces to attack, believing that the South Koreans did not have a military force strong enough to deter them. Their assessment was correct, and the result was the immediate and brutal conquest of South Korea.

Most reasonable people in the West would automatically see North Korea’s invasion of South Korea as an unprovoked act of aggression. But many Asians at the time saw the same military action as a needed step to reunify the homeland, liberating the South Koreans from their ties to Western imperialism. A few months later in October, U.S.-led forces of the United Nations not only recaptured all South Korean territory below the 38th parallel, but they also advanced all the way into the “aggressor nation” to the Yalu River, the border between China and North Korea. Again, from a Western perspective, military forces are trained to drive invading forces out of captured territory and then to penetrate the aggressor’s homeland, cutting supply lines and destroying the ability to wage war.

General Douglas MacArthur, in a devastating miscalculation, believed that China would not enter the war. Yet the Chinese saw the U.S. advance toward its borders as yet another in a series of Western preparations to conquer and eventually dismember their homeland.⁶ Consequently, massive numbers of Chinese troops crossed the Yalu River in late November and successfully drove U.N. forces out of North Korea. Sur-

6. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, Imperial China lost much

prised and humiliated by the counterattack, the United Nations branded China “an aggressor nation.”⁷ Mao Tse-tung, however, saw the issue of aggression from a different perspective: “We are for peace. But so long as U.S. imperialism refuses to give up its arrogant and unreasonable demands and its scheme to extend aggression, the only course for the Chinese people is to remain determined to go on fighting side by side with the Korean people.”⁸ Mao Tse-tung is for peace, as he defines it. In his support for wars of national liberation, Chairman Mao envisioned an Asia free from Western hegemony as Korea, Vietnam, and several other former dominions once again become subservient to China.

The two perspectives I’ve briefly presented, the United Nations’ and Mao Tse-tung’s, were diametrically opposed and are still unresolved. Chairman Mao acted according to a principle advocated by Sun Tzu, a Chinese military theorist, in his *Art of War*, the oldest military treatise in the world, written more than 2,400 years ago—and still relevant today: “The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy’s not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable.”⁹

While stationed at Osan Air Base, South Korea, in the mid-1970s, I met one evening with several members of the Korean general staff who told me how grateful they were for the U.S. military presence since it ensured stability in the region. Earlier that day, I had reviewed war plans with other commanders as we prepared for what we thought would be an

of its territory and suzerainties to five other imperialist powers: Russia, Japan, France, England, and Germany. These losses both humiliated and angered the Chinese in the Qing Dynasty, paving the way for Mao Tse-tung and the revolutions of the twentieth century.

7. For a brief but well-documented history of a pro-American assessment of this limited war, see Robert C. Freeman and Dennis A. Wright, *Saints at War: Korea and Vietnam* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2003), 2–16 (reviewed in this issue).

8. This is an excerpt of a speech Chairman Mao delivered at the First National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, February 7, 1953. For a variety of perspectives on the history and theory of warfare, see the Air War College Gateway to Military Theory and Strategy Website <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/awc-thry.htm>.

9. Retrieved in October 2003 from <http://earthops.org/sun-tzu.html>.

attack from the north. Thankfully the attack never materialized. Although the situation remained tense for several months, the gratitude expressed to me that evening by the South Korean generals made me feel that my contribution, however small, to their country's security was both valuable and appreciated.

Contrast that experience with the one I had when I returned from Korea to pursue an air force-sponsored doctoral program at the University of Arizona. That first day on campus, I proudly wore my military uniform. When a small group of young men saw me, they crowded me from the sidewalk. One spit on me and called me a baby killer. Somehow I managed not to lose control. A few minutes later, I signed in at the university's ROTC detachment,¹⁰ and the commander, dressed in a civilian suit and tie, told me what I had just learned about anti-war protesters, then ordered me to return home to change into civilian clothing.

I understood that I was, to the demonstrators at least, not an individual but a symbol of the military-industrial complex they despised. Yet it was that same military that silently deterred hostile nation-states from attacking the United States, giving the campus demonstrators the freedom to protest. Though the jostling I experienced that day was personally uncomfortable, I knew that those college students had the right to free speech, and I would have fought, especially to preserve that freedom for them, if I were ever called upon to defend our homeland.

For a fleeting moment that fall day, I longed to return to Korea where I felt that what I represented and who I was, both as a military officer and as a peace-loving Latter-day Saint, had been appreciated.¹¹ Then, in later moments of personal reflection, I remembered that, while I was in Korea, university students in Seoul had held a demonstration, protesting what they perceived as a U.S. occupation of their homeland. On the day I witnessed it, what began as a nonviolent protest quickly developed into another Selma, Alabama, as police officers confronted the demonstrators.

10. Many major colleges and universities in the United States have Reserve Officer Training Corps programs that prepare selected students for commissioning as officers in the United States Air Force or other branches of military service. I received my commission as a second lieutenant in 1969 at BYU.

11. In addition to my role as a commander of three hundred enlisted men and women, I was the president of the LDS servicemen's branch at Osan Air Base.

Tempers flared, then chaos: students breaking windows and overturning vehicles, police officers clubbing the protesters, destructive counterattacks, the use of tear gas, the arrival of reinforcements, and ultimately a painfully enforced stalemate.

This brief protest reminded me of other long-term organized resistance movements throughout the world. Some, such as Mahatma Gandhi's resistance to British rule in India, have become legendary. But we often forget the epilogue: Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic; a civil war between Hindus and Muslims fractured the newly formed Indian state; and Pakistan and India, now both nuclear powers, are engaged in a protracted cold war of their own, the potential detonator being the struggle to control Kashmir. And as in Korea, human casualties along contested borders continue to pile up.

Fifty years after negotiators achieved a hostile stalemate in Korea, I still cannot envision any peaceful resolution that would be acceptable to both sides, especially now that North Korea has devastating weapons and delivery systems. When its military capability is linked with poverty, desperation, and a fanatical ruler, potential scenarios are catastrophic. The earlier decade-long wars in Vietnam, from the Chinese perspective, are simply seen as other attempts by Western imperialists, France and the United States, to invade another nation-state, like Korea, once under the suzerainty of China. Chinese military strategists think historically. When they feel that China is strong enough militarily and economically, they will advocate reclaiming former lands and territories taken from China by Western imperialists.

From a Chinese perspective, future conflict with one or more Western powers is inevitable. As we know, the past wars in Korea and Vietnam brought the United States almost to the brink of World War III with China. But the United States continues to intervene militarily throughout the world. The United States, both at home and abroad, has been criticized—and justly so in some cases—for fifty years of military interventions. Yet some human rights advocates like Hedges feel that the armed forces of our country, along with those of other members of the industrialized world, have not intervened enough and therefore are responsible for many of the world's genocides (Chechnya, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Rwanda) because we "had the power

to intervene and did not.”¹² To intervene or not is a complex moral question.

As one of several resources of our political leaders, the United States military has been tasked with an ever-increasing role, from war fighting to peacekeeping to deterrence, along with alleviating humanitarian suffering and making a show of force in a crisis. Although our military is one-third smaller and one-third less expensive than it was at the end of the Cold War, our force has never been better educated or more experienced. But there’s only so much that the United States and its allies can do diplomatically, economically, and militarily to further the goal of world peace.

During my twenty years in the military, I had hoped briefly that a peaceful solution might be possible after more than two millennia of Arab/Israeli wars. The event was the 1978 Camp David Peace Accords signed by Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat and Israeli prime minister Menachim Begin, facilitated by U.S. president Jimmy Carter. That same year, Sadat and Begin shared the Nobel Peace Prize for their historic agreements. And in 2002, Carter won that same prize, with emphasis on his post-presidential international humanitarian efforts through the Carter Center.

Though these three men made important progress toward world peace, Israel today still finds itself in a state of war with its Arab neighbors. Sadat was assassinated in 1981, only three years after signing the accords, and today’s “road map for peace” in the Middle East is already in tatters due to a variety of factors, the most obvious being Hamas-sponsored suicide bombings; Israeli hard-liners with their mentality of immediate retribution; and America’s “shock and awe” bombing of Baghdad, along with its present occupation of Iraq.

Writing about the current Arab/Israeli conflict, Bradley J. Cook asks us “to actively publish peace,” then admits that it “may be regrettably true” that, in this region of the world, “bloody conflict is inevitable.”¹³ I don’t know where the road map will direct us, but it probably won’t be toward the perpetual peace so hoped for in that limited, but perennially explosive, region of the world.

Although the continuing Arab/Israeli conflict receives global atten-

12. Hedges, *War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*, 16.

13. Bradley J. Cook, “The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict Reconsidered,” *DIALOGUE* 36 (Spring 2003): 6.

tion in the news, dozens of lesser known, limited wars rage throughout the world, many of them requiring U.S. military presence. No longer does our military demobilize, as had been the case historically, when the immediate threat of war seems remote. Presidents from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush have encouraged Congress to fund and maintain a strong military. But hotly debated issues remain unresolved, such as when, where, how, to what extent, and even whether the United States should use its military forces abroad.

Some would argue for the just war theory: that a nation-state has the legal and moral right to bear arms. Of all the wars in the twentieth century, World War II, many feel, best represents this theory. For example, Fascist forces terrorized much of Europe, and several nation-states reacted militarily to those attacks, arguing that they had the legal and moral right to do so. The positive results of the war, although not uniformly perfect, were nonetheless measurable. Repressive regimes were destroyed; and with the help of the Marshall Plan, freedom-loving societies were rebuilt, many of them still flourishing more than fifty years later.

Still many reject the just war theory, instead espousing various forms of pacifism. But a closer look at these versions of pacifism reveals why each one, no matter how appealing it may be individually, can never produce perpetual peace. And without military preparedness, the peace process itself would never even be considered seriously by the leaders of many regimes. For example, one approach to the threat of World War II was a failed form of pacifism attempted diplomatically. In addition to numerous peace negotiations that had taken place during the decade preceding the war, Neville Chamberlain, British prime minister, advocated "peace in our time" through appeasement. But concessions usually do not stop an aggressor like Adolf Hitler. What stops him, if he is to be stopped, is self-imposed restraint based upon his perception of an opponent's strength as measured directly in military preparedness. What Hitler perceived was weakness, so he attacked.

Other alternatives tried in a World War II setting could be categorized as absolute pacifism—the belief that all forms of violence and war are always wrong and therefore need to be replaced by surrender (Belgium), displacement of scapegoat populations (the Jews being moved from ghettos to concentration camps), migration (Parisians abandoning their city), arbitration (the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I), or compromise (the Munich Agreement). Absolute pacifism, of course, assumes that

there are acceptable peaceful alternatives to war. In too many instances, however, absolute pacifism simply results in a blood bath.

In Asia three decades after World War II, we see what happens, as in neighboring Vietnam, when Cambodians are left alone to face a brutal regime that subscribes to the Chinese model of liberation. Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge simply attacked, displacing entire urban populations, leaving millions dead in “the killing fields.”¹⁴ While stationed at the U.S. Air Force Academy, I talked to several Cambodian men who had escaped the mass slaughters and made their way to Thailand where they found LDS military officers willing to sponsor them in the United States. In my interviews, I found that these peace-loving Cambodians would have been killed by the Khmer Rouge simply because they wore glasses, the identifying mark of an intellectual.

Pol Pot had learned from Hitler’s earlier example how to occupy a country and, at the same time, destroy any resistance. In 1939, for example, after Germany and Russia had conquered Poland in just a few weeks, German SS troops entered the capital and “went door to door, murdering two hundred people a day: teachers, intellectuals, doctors, clergymen, and, of course, the hated Jews.”¹⁵ Because of these and hundreds of other similar historical examples, I cannot accept absolute pacifism as a viable option for averting war because martyrs and conscientious objectors, no matter how noble and worthy of respect, will never deter ruthless aggressors.

A more reasonable alternative to war is conditional pacifism, the realization that the duty to uphold peace may conflict with an equally compelling duty to defend and uphold rights, such as liberating once free peoples or countries now being oppressed and brutalized. One of the most appealing arguments for conditional pacifism is Jonathan Schell’s essay, “No

14. Kampuchea, before 1976, was known as Cambodia. In 1953, under the leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia achieved a precarious neutrality with neighboring Vietnam. An anti-Communist military junta overthrew the Sihanouk regime in 1970, provoking Communist insurgents in the countryside, popularly called the Khmer Rouge, to initiate guerrilla warfare against the new government. On April 17, 1975, two weeks before the fall of Saigon, Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge seized power in the capital Phnom Penh, executing millions of Kampucheans.

15. Peter Jennings and Todd Brewster, *The Century* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 215.

More Unto the Breach,” published in *Harper's* in 2003.¹⁶ Schell begins with the assumption that war is futile in resolving international conflicts, then argues for establishing cooperative structures that incrementally pursue “revolutionary ends by peaceful, reformist means.” Yet at the same time, he admits that some type of enforcement is needed, not American hegemony or Gandhian global politics, but rather “a vision of an international community that fundamentally relies on consent and the cooperative power it creates but nevertheless reserves the right to use force in certain limited, well-defined circumstances sanctioned by defined, widely accepted procedures.”¹⁷

Of course, the foundation of Schell's plan is the credible military force the international community would have to assemble, a force strong enough to ensure the peace. Though I admire Schell's proposal, I'm somewhat cynical when I try to envision its being implemented peacefully worldwide. If even a majority of world leaders shared Schell's mindset, then the paradigm shift from war to peace would be possible. But the reality is that many leaders glory in war, conquest, brutality, dominion, and power. Hedges states this unsettling reality: “War, at times inevitable and unavoidable, is part of human society. It has been since the dawn of time—and probably will be until we are snuffed out by our own foolishness.”¹⁸

Rating the overall success of conditional pacifism or even nonviolence to achieve peace then and now as an alternative to war is a difficult process. LDS intellectual Robert A. Rees believes that Mormon culture must radically “change in its attitudes toward war and peace.”¹⁹ Essentially he argues for a Gandhi-type nonviolent resistance as a way of stopping Saddam Hussein, Adolf Hitler, or other brutal tyrants. To support his argu-

16. Jonathan Schell, “No More Unto the Breach. Part 1: Why War Is Futile,” *Harper's*, March 2003, 33–46; “Part 2: The Unconquerable World,” *Harper's*, April 2003, 41–55. Schell is Harold Willens Peace Fellow at the Nation Institute.

17. Schell, “The Unconquerable World,” 47, 53.

18. Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, 25–26.

19. Robert A. Rees, “America's War on Terrorism: One Latter-day Saint's Perspective,” *DIALOGUE* 36 (Spring 2003): 24, 27. Rees, former editor of *DIALOGUE*, presents a thoughtful and clearly articulated argument for peace, but one that, it seems to me, is much too idealistic for this world in which we live. In his article, Rees added a “Grace Note.” May I now add one of my own? My father too served in the infantry on the German front in World War II. He was involved

ment, he cites an article entitled "With Weapons of the Will: How to Topple Saddam Hussein—Nonviolently," by Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall. According to Rees, these two believe that nonviolent resistance "worked against the Nazis"²⁰ and could have worked against Hussein.

Now that Hussein's regime has been displaced, the issue is moot. But one thing is sure: it was the military might of the United States and its allies that was the major force in defeating the Nazis. Some might call this approach "pacifism," a term defined by Martin Caedel (*Thinking about War and Peace*, 1987) to describe those who prefer peace to war but who also accept that some wars may be necessary if they advance the cause of peace. World War II did just that. My hope is that, as the United States begins to act more in concert with freedom-loving nation-states, many current wars might achieve similar results, not only in the Middle East, but worldwide.

Realistically, though, the dark side of human nature seems to preclude perpetual peace. Well-coordinated actions (just war theory, various forms of pacifism, or even deterrence) sometimes produce spectacular short-term results, but the actions themselves, no matter how well-intentioned, usually result in future conflict as various warlords, power-hungry militarists, oppressed ethnic minorities, or religious fanatics demonize "the other," creating or re-creating targets of hate, discord, and instability: "Gentlemen may cry, 'Peace! Peace!' But there is no peace."²¹ Historically and theologically, it is war that is eternal, not peace. Jan Dalby's succinct assertion is one with which I must sadly concur: "I wish I could say that war has no value whatsoever. However, when depraved and evil men forcibly enslave, brutally torture, or systematically murder innocent human

in hand-to-hand combat with rifle and bayonet and was later severely wounded by shrapnel from a mortar. When he returned home, he told me, throughout my growing-up years, that he had shed enough blood for both of us, so that I would never have to serve in the military. He also was much too idealistic as had been President Woodrow Wilson in an earlier World War I, the war "to make the world safe for democracy."

20. *Ibid.*, 19.

21. Patrick Henry spoke these words in his address to the Virginia Assembly of Delegates, March 23, 1775, quickly changing the tenor of the debate from thoughts of peace and reconciliation with England to preparations for war and separation.

beings, the skillful application of accepted principles of war to eliminate such scum seems all too kind—but absolutely necessary.”²²

Even LDS theology, despite the Church’s admittedly multi-faceted official position on war, suggests its eternal nature. Writing in 1992, scholar Robert S. Woodson sees the LDS position on war as a complex synthesis of at least five values: (1) an idealistic view that true peace can be found only in Jesus Christ; (2) a God-given mandate to renounce war and proclaim peace; (3) repugnance toward any political system, group, or nation-state that uses force to deny personal choice or agency; (4) the recognition that some defensive wars may be necessary; and (5) a belief that the United States has a divine destiny to establish international peace and freedom.²³ Referencing just war theory, President Gordon B. Hinckley stated recently that “there are times and circumstances when nations are justified, in fact have an obligation, to fight for family, for liberty, and against tyranny, threat, and oppression.”²⁴

From the Latter-day Saint theological concept of a “war in heaven”

22. Jan Dalby, e-mail to author, June 18, 2003. Dalby, a former colleague in the Department of English, U.S. Air Force Academy, in the 1980s, a Latter-day Saint, and a close friend for the past twenty years, is a retired air force lieutenant colonel and public affairs officer.

23. Robert S. Wood, “War and Peace,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4:1547. See also the varied perspectives of Joseph F. Boone, “The Roles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Relation to the United States Military, 1900–1975,” 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1975); Pierre Blais, “The Enduring Paradox: Mormon Attitudes Toward War and Peace,” *DIALOGUE* 17 (Winter 1984): 61–73; Eugene England, “Can Nations Love Their Enemies? An LDS Theology of Peace,” *Sunstone*, November/December 1982, 49–56; Ronald W. Walker, “Sheaves, Bucklers, and the State: Mormon Leaders Respond to the Dilemmas of War,” *Sunstone*, July/August 1982, 43–55; Edwin Brown Firmage, “Violence and the Gospel: The Teachings of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 25 (Winter 1985): 31–53; Edwin Brown Firmage and Christopher L. Blakesley, “Clark, Law and International Order,” *BYU Studies* 13 (Spring 1973): 273–346.

24. Gordon B. Hinckley, “War and Peace,” *Ensign* 33 (May 2003): 80. President Hinckley’s conference address shows how difficult it is for a leader of an international church to articulate a complex theological position without being misunderstood or misinterpreted. Within my small circle of acquaintances, it

in a preexistent state to the great war following the hoped for millennium, war seems to be everlasting. According to the Federation of American Scientists, there are currently thirty-three conflicts being waged at various sites around the world, with an additional 155 having concluded during the past sixty years.²⁵ Its Military Analysis Network begins its extensive lists with a quotation from Immanuel Kant, an “enlightened” idealist who lived long before the devastating wars of the twentieth century: “Perpetual peace is no empty idea, but a practical thing which, through its gradual solution, is coming always nearer its final realization.” This quotation ironically precedes a sobering multi-page list of today’s wars. In fact, all of our contemporary philanthropic efforts to achieve peace (the Carnegie and Wilson endowments, along with the Carter Center, to name only a few) have not substantially reduced the number or the ferocity of worldwide conflicts.

On March 24–25, 1989, just months before I retired from active duty in the U.S. Air Force, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies sponsored a symposium at Brigham Young University on “Warfare in the Book of Mormon.”²⁶ Participant William J. Hamblin observed: “The inevitability of war has always been a chief criterion in determining how ancient societies organized themselves.”²⁷ Another presenter, Hugh Nibley, cited a famous military theorist who also uses the word *inevitable*: “It seems that war is inevitable according to Clausewitz. President [Ezra Taft] Benson is right—he says it all applies to us. That’s why I don’t like the wars in the Book of Mormon. They make me ill.”²⁸

seems to me that too many people allow themselves to become offended by a word, phrase, or idea he expressed.

25. Retrieved in October 2003 from <http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/war/>.

26. The conference proceedings were published as Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin, eds., *Warfare in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1990). I rely on this volume for much of the material in this section.

27. William J. Hamblin, “The Importance of Warfare in Book of Mormon Studies,” in *ibid.*, 482.

28. Hugh Nibley, “Warfare and the Book of Mormon,” *ibid.*, 144. He was referring to Karl von Clausewitz (1780–1831), a Prussian soldier, military theorist,

When my friend Don Darnell²⁹ and I read the Book of Mormon for the first time in the summer of 1960 while working as miners in Uravan, Colorado, we too were saddened by Mormon's vivid depiction of warfare. But our first reading was personal, not scholarly. As we read, Nibley had not yet made his enumerations: "The words 'destruction' and 'destroy' appear 534 times in the Book of Mormon, and nearly always in conjunction with the word *war*."³⁰ Don and I did not count the hundred instances of armed conflict as John Sorenson would later do. Nor did we concern ourselves categorizing many of the main wars ("The Early Tribal Wars" to "The Final Nephite Wars, Phase 3") as would John W. Welch.³¹

As Don and I talked each night about the material we had read, we gradually were able to accept Mormon's depiction of the inevitability of war while we focused on his description of the righteous warriors who had fought, not for blood or power or glory, but for defense of family, homeland, and the weak: Ammon, Captain Moroni, the sons of Helaman, Mormon himself, and his son Moroni. While we discussed these spiritual warriors, our admiration for them grew, as did our love for the Book of Mormon. Then one night, as we knelt in prayer, we sensed God's presence, and our lives changed forever.³² From that moment on, Don and I have tried to model our lives on the great spiritual warriors delineated so powerfully in this sacred book of scripture.

But even Mormon and Moroni could not avert the inevitable. The

and author of the three-volume *On War* in which he relates war to politics: "War is a continuation of politics by other means." I studied von Clausewitz's theories first in ROTC classes and later, during my military career, in three military education programs: Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College, and Air War College.

29. Don received his commission as a second lieutenant from BYU's ROTC program in May 1965, just a month after I returned from an LDS mission to France. We had long talks before he and his wife, Celia, left for pilot training. Don became an F-4 fighter pilot, a "top gun" in Vietnam, and later a district president in the Philippines. Because of his example and the reality of an imminent military draft in May 1967 when I completed my bachelor's degree, I competed successfully for a position in the Professional Officer Corps in BYU's ROTC program.

30. Nibley, "Warfare and the Book of Mormon," 135.

31. John W. Welch, "Why Study Warfare in the Book of Mormon?" in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, 5-16.

32. Robert M. Hogge, "A Friend in Christ," *Ensign*, October 1992, 25-26.

Book of Mormon ends in genocide, a reality with which we're all too familiar. Although our twenty-first century world is still at war, I continue to hope for the coming of the millennium. Yet even after this blessed thousand years of peace, a brief interlude in the earth's long history, war will recommence, bringing about the end of the world in its present form.

If today's leaders and their people were righteous, then perpetual peace would be possible. But, as Friedrich Nietzsche reminds us, "We children of the future do not by any means think it is desirable that the kingdom of righteousness and peace should be established on the earth."³³ As the prophet Joseph Smith once said, "The greatest acts of mighty men have been to depopulate nations and to overthrow kingdoms; and whilst they have exalted themselves and become glorious, it has been at the expense of the lives of the innocent, the blood of the oppressed, the moans of the widow, and the tears of the orphan."³⁴ Though we should use all peaceful means of persuasion, diplomacy, arbitration, and negotiation to help resolve worldwide disputes amicably, military preparedness, when all else fails, is essential for any nation's survival, including our own.

33. Quoted in Boone, "The Roles of the Church," 1:182.

34. Quoted in *ibid.*, 1:32.