“PEACE THROUGH UNDERSTANDING”: SCIENCE FICTION ANIME Mobile Suit Gundam 00 CRITICIZES U.S. AGGRESSION AND JAPANESE PASSIVITY

William Ashbaugh
State University of New York, College at Oneonta (SUNY Oneonta), United States
Shintaro MIZUSHIMA
Kinki University, Japan

Abstract. This paper examines the recent television, novel, comic, and movie animation series *Mobile Suit Gundam 00* and its criticism of contemporary geopolitics. *Gundam 00* started in Japan October 2007; Bandai Entertainment dubbed the show into English and aired it on SyFy Channel on U.S. basic cable a year later. The film *A Wakening of the Trailblazer* concluded the *Gundam 00* story in 2010; bilingual DVD and Blu-ray releases in the U.S. followed in 2011. *Gundam 00* posits a post-petroleum world where three competing superpower blocs use access to solar power from space platforms to vie with each other for supremacy while weaker nations serve as pawns in this great game. A secret force known as “Celestial Being” decides to force the elimination of war by using its high tech super fighting force, the four Gundam combat machines, to attack anyone that attempts aggression. The creators use science fiction to challenge the United States and its “preventive war” against Iraq and the passivity of Japan’s population when it comes to global issues. They show that attempts to end war through war are stupidly counter-productive, and do so almost simultaneously in Japan and the U.S. through the globalizing influence of anime.

INTRODUCTION

As acclaimed science fiction/fantasy writer Ursula K. Le Guin explains in her non-fiction introduction to her novel *Left Hand of Darkness* (Le Guin, 1969, p. xii-xiii), science fiction is not about predicting the future, but about interpreting the present. What is true for its print form is equally true in film and today’s more expansive television series, as their strong visuals often serve more powerful ways of forming collective memory than writing (Fujitani, White, & Yoneyama, 2001, 17-22). Examples from film include the first *Gojira* movie directed by Honda Ishirō in 1954 (*Godzilla in America*), with the monster representing misuse of the hydrogen atom for nuclear weapons (Napier, 1993, 331-332; and Tsutsui, 2004, 14, 18-19); *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* directed by Don Siegel in 1956, a Red Scare-era critique on conformity (Mann, 2004); and, for both film and television, the original *Battlestar Galactica* directed by Richard Colla in 1978, part of the 1970s conservative paranoia of a surprise Soviet nuclear attack after détente had sapped American resolve (Muir, 2008). Japanese animation (or anime) scholar Susan J. Napier has suggested, science fiction--the most popular genre of anime--can provide an array of insights into contemporary issues through its “distinctive narrative and visual aesthetic” (Napier 2001: 4, 8, 10-12, 17). In fact, the first thirty minute regularly broadcast anime program in Japan was the science fiction show *Astro Boy* created by Tezuka Osamu’s studio in 1963, called in Japanese *Tetsuwan Atomu* (Mighty Atom). It focused on the evils of discrimination, with additional themes of environmentalism and pacifism also apparent (Schodt, 2007).

This paper examines one of the newest members of Japan’s most popular science fiction anime franchise *Kidou Senshi Gandamu* (*Mobile Suit Gundam*), through its two seasons on television, its concluding movie, and its associated comics and novels: *Mobile Suit Gundam 00* (2007-2010). The show was created during the depressing days of the failing Iraq occupation through the American General David Petraeus-led troop surge that seemed to cripple the insurgency (Allawi, 2007; Woodward, 2008; Ricks, 2009). *Gundam 00*’s underlying theme is that peace can only be achieved through understanding, not fighting or preparing for war. Throughout the combined fifty episodes of the two seasons, the creators
show the futility of war, sharply attacking U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq while simultaneously criticizing Japan’s twenty-first century isolation from the world and its endemic violence.

Nothing in Japanese science fiction fandom, with the possible exception of Gojira, can compete with the overwhelming nature of the *Gundam* phenomena. On April 7, 2009, Japan celebrated the 30th anniversary of the first animated *Gundam* program, which included an eighteen meter-high “life-sized” statue of the eponymous “mobile suit” placed in Tokyo’s Shiokaze Park throughout the summer (Picture of the day, 2009), and the announcement of two future *Gundam* anime projects. The *Gundam* animated science fiction franchise has proven to be a cross-media juggernaut for Namco Bandai Holdings, the fourth largest toy manufacturer in the world; it is its most valuable franchise, with profits in 2011 expected to be worth 43.5 billion yen (approximately $550 million) (Bandai Namco, 2011). By 2012, Bandai, the toy and anime distribution subsidiary of Namco Bandai Holdings (to confuse things, it the conglomerate is often referred to as Bandai Namco or just Bandai), and its animation arm Sunrise had created a huge number of programs with *Gundam* in the title: twelve different “universes,” fourteen different television series, four original movies, thirteen compilation television or straight-to-video specials, eleven compilation films, ten original straight-to-video (OVA) series, and a bevy of animated shorts for placement inside model kits, on amusement park rides, and on the internet. This is not to count the myriad of model and toy kits, games, video games, posters, costumes, ephemera, novels, and comics released by Bandai and associated companies. By 2000, Bandai had released seven hundred different model kits, and total worldwide sales amounted to 350 million models (Chin, 2000). In fact, sales of Bandai’s model kits of the original *Gundam* show, along with frequent re-runs allowing those who missed the program the first time, helped create the boom in interest that made the franchise popular in reruns, enabled Bandai to purchase the animation company (Nippon Sunrise, later called just Sunrise) responsible for the show in the first place (Simmons, 2002).

The original *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979-1980) has become a beloved Japanese popular classic, and set the stage for a long line of sequels and then new programs using the *Gundam* name. And one should consider the anime a science fiction story, rather than merely science fantasy: the original ideas of a realistic powered suit piloted by humans for the program came out of the science fiction novel *Starship Troopers* by Robert A. Heinlein (Tatsumi, 2005). *Gundam* is credited for helping push other Japanese creators into making more realistic science fiction anime. Like other popular intellectual properties (like Mickey Mouse or Star Wars in the U.S. or elsewhere) *Gundam* often serves as a campaign for different products, including Pepsi and Cup Noodle. It even figures directly in Japanese television commercials: the voice tracks for two scenes from the original show were re-edited to advertise the instant soup (Gundam sells noodles, 2007). Nearly all Japanese have heard of the franchise – the original three movies being declared the second greatest anime ever released (30 Greatest Anime Films, 2006) -- and most under fifty have seen at least a few minutes of an anime called *Gundam*, with many others seeing whole series. Popular comedians have even made careers laughing with or at *Gundam* and its fans (Tsuchida, 2009; Wakai, 2008). Finally, in a stunning news item that shows the adult fan-base of *Gundam*, Japan’s Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries had to reprimand six of its employees for adding to Wikipedia while at work, with one fan making or changing over two hundred *Gundam* entries (Ministry officials, 2007).

What makes a *Gundam* television series or movie a *Gundam* series and not just another giant robot anime? First of all, the show must feature manned sixty-foot-tall war machines (although on rare occasions forty-five feet tall), with the one or more named Gundam the most powerful. They must battle three or more centuries in the future on earth, in space near colonies orbiting the earth or moon (oftentimes refered to as the Earth Sphere), or both. The pilots are usually teenagers lacking formal
military training or discipline. Any given Gundam program takes place during or after destructive wars have ravaged or continue to ravage humanity. These wars only further exacerbate the ecological problems already apparent in the twentieth century, like pollution and over-population. The Gundam programs thus serve as a turn from goofy super robots into the realm of science fiction’s “realistic robot animation” (Wright, 2002, 5, 10). Many series look forward to the evolution of humankind, either accomplished scientifically or through nature as people work in outer space (Simmons, 2002). The Gundam programs also highlight a respect for the environment (Solomon, 2011) and a strong anti-war message (Vernal, 1995; Hawkes, 2010; and Ashbaugh, 2010).

GUNDAM 00

Mobile Suit Gundam 00 was broadcast in Japan from October 6, 2007 to March 29, 2009. For the first time in Gundam series history the show aired with a six-month delay between in two separate seasons. Bandai Entertainment, Bandai’s U.S. subsidiary, dubbed the show into English and aired it on the Sci-Fi Channel (which later changed its name to SyFy) on U.S. basic cable at the end of 2008. The channel was a good fit for Gundam 00, as it was the network that had already aired the first three and a half seasons of 2004’s re-imagined Battlestar Galactica (BSG). BSG is a work of science fiction depicting the post-9/11 world, specifically the war on terror and the consequences of the invasion of Iraq (Ott, 2008); Gundam 00 focused through allegory on similar world problems. The film Mobile Suit Gundam 00: A Wakening of the Trailblazer continued and concluded the story, premiering in theaters across Japan September 18, 2010, quickly followed by a subtitled version that opened in New York City October 10th. The television show and film quickly followed in DVD format in both countries, as well as around the world. As such, Japanese and American audiences have been exposed at nearly the same time to its story and message of pacifism and criticism of contemporary geopolitics.

First Season

The first season of Gundam 00 posits a world a mere three centuries from now. Fossil fuels have run low, so humankind has turned to solar energy and banned the use of oil and gasoline as power sources. Although nation states continue to exist, three competing groupings of national powers -- the Union of Solar Energy and Free Nations (Union), the Advanced European Union (AEU), and the Human Reform League (HRL) -- each have access to solar power generated in orbit through their own gigantic orbital elevators. The United States is the main player in the Union, which includes most of North and South America, Australia, and New Zealand, with Japan (a “Special Economic Zone of the Union” in the anime) taking upon itself the responsibility of financial support of Union’s policies. The Union operates closest to how the United States does at the end of the 20th century. The AEU includes most of Europe through the Urals plus Turkey, and controls much of Africa. Today’s main powers in Europe run the AEU in collaboration, especially the nations of German, Britain, and France. The AEU represents a dynamically independent European Union in the mold of France during the years 2002-2008, if it were also more aggressive on the world stage. The HRL is Asia east of the Islamic countries of west and southwest Asia. Non-European Russia, India, and China control its destiny, serving to show the rising tide of China and India toward great power status in the early 21st century. A scattering of independent states within the three competing superpowers and the countries Middle East remain the only non-aligned states. The Middle East has suffered greatly as the year 2307 dawns, having been the main theater of warfare when the UN, controlled by the three blocs, prohibited the use of fossil fuels; Middle Eastern countries decided to fight to keep oil profits flowing, leading to twenty years of war and defeat. The small countries, besides being poor and not always having access to the cheap energy of the solar collectors, serve as
pawns in the zero sum game machinations of the three main powers. The independent states are all given quite fanciful fictitious names that do not quite equate with the world’s current boundaries.

Into this world in episode 1 appears a secretive, private military force known as Celestial Being. Through a series of interventions aimed at stopping warfare and terrorism of the time, the group announces that it will force the elimination of all war by using its high tech super fighting force, four Gundam combat machines. These well-armored mobile suits, armed with weapons far more destructive than any competing state or group of states can muster, will fight any country that attempts aggression. These activities can be seen as similar to those of Captain Nemo and his vessel the Nautilus in Disney movie version of Jules Verne’s Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea directed by Richard Fleischer in 1954. Yet as the first season progresses, it appears that the series writer Kuroda Yosuke and director Mizushima Seiji are using the story in their science fiction anime to comment on today’s world. In one of the more telling exchanges in episode 1, the Union leadership responds to the broadcast demands of Celestial Being for a global end to war and conflict. “To end fighting through warfare, hm? . . . It seems as if this group is trying to act as a substitute for us,” muses the Union president. “We have always been the ones who intervened in the world’s conflicts in order to assure the safety of our citizens and to preserve our national interests. We were never inhumane.” The irony in the last sentence, that the U.S. was never inhumane, goes to the heart of international criticism of the United States and its actions as opposed to what most Americans think of their government’s actions abroad. This mocking statement by workers toiling in Japan’s animation industry should not surprise anyone, considering that celebrated anime director Miyazaki Hayao confessed in 2009 the reason he had avoided travelling to the United States for the Academy Awards in 2003 was his distaste over the American attack on Iraq (Pham, 2009).

But how can we be sure that the creators of Gundam 00 have in mind commentary about the present and are not just out to sell more plastic model kits by telling another violent space fantasy? Hints abound throughout the program that show through visuals, plot lines involving current-day conflicts, and issues about the environment and making peace through war that the world of the early 24th century is really the world of the early 21st century.

First of all, there are characters in the two series that bear striking resemblances to leaders of nations active during the planning of the series: including the time to plot the second season planning started in early 2006 through late 2008, albeit in younger and more handsome or more beautiful guises. Appearing in the first few episodes when the blocs try to respond to Celestial Being, two members of the AEU council – a woman with short blond hair and a man with short dark hair -- look very much like a young German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy, respectively. In fact, to make the Merkel connection even stronger, in episode 6 the un-named character approves launching an invasion, advising the rest to ignore “what happened three centuries ago” — a not-so-subtle notice that Germany has been loath to send troops abroad for fear of stoking up the old resentments caused by the Second World War. At the episode 25 of season one, the new president of the Earth Sphere Federation resembles Barack Obama. And in episode 22, one of the main Union military commanders looks like former Secretary of State Colin Powell, even wearing the general’s familiar glasses. A young, dashing version of current Venezuelan President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías appears in episode 4, demanding a cessation of U.S. control over the Union and its solar energy as president of the fictional Taribian Republic, located where today’s Columbia and Venezuela meet. At the end of season two and in the movie, the new president of the Earth Sphere Federation has the look of Secretary of State Hilary Clinton.

Besides the conflict between the United States and Taribia/Venezuela just mentioned, Gundam 00 mentions or shows conflicts and organizations that were making headlines at the time of the creation of
season one. The conflict between the Tamils and the majority Sri Lankan population (episode 2), the Real Irish Republican Army (episode 4), the problems caused by private military corporations (episode 6), coordinated terror bombings throughout the large cities of the world (episodes 7-8), and conflict in between religious people (the Conservatives versus the Reformers) in what appears to be Iraq (although in this case the fictional country Azadistan, which on the map looks to be the geographic combination of Iraq and Iran). Two of the four Gundam pilots joined Celestial Being after lives torn apart by real-world 21st century problems. Lockon Stratos (a codename) lost his parents and sister in a bombing by Middle Eastern terrorists. Setsuna F. Seiei (again a codename) was a child-soldier guerilla of the fictional Krugis Republic, which translates in the world of *Gundam 00* as the region Kurds call Kurdistan. As a child Setsuna was brain-washed through religion into joining the guerilla/terrorist group KPSA (acronym never defined). He was forced by the leader of the group, Ali al-Saachez, to shoot and kill his parents, something that was making headlines during the planning stage of production, albeit in northern Uganda; the Lord’s Resistance Army forced children to kill their parents and them become child-soldiers (Finnström, 2006; Ternstrom, 2005; Ehrenreich, 1998). Child-soldiers have fought and continue to fight throughout the world in the post-Cold War era, especially in Africa and the Middle-East (Singer, 2005). Finally, the three blocs spend the majority of the first season desperately trying to develop weapons of war that will equal Celestial Being’s Gundams with their powerful Gundam Nucleus drives (GN drive, the secret harnessing of light photons through a solar reactor), something that suggests the frantic quest for atomic weapons and long-range missiles by Iran and North Korea in the days following the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Although a secondary issue for the *Gundam 00* series, protecting the environment plays a quiet role. By the start of the 24th century, strong prohibitions on exporting fossil fuels prevented all but a tiny petroleum industry. Instead, solar energy powers the industrialized world. Using the sun shows the commitment made by Japan’s people and government to cut carbon dioxide levels to try and limit the effects of climate change. Yet only a couple of brief mentions of the environment occur in the fifty episodes—something in stark contrast to the creators of the series when dealing with matters of peace and war. The reason for such silence of the issue of global warming or climate change caused by human activity fear mention will be used as a political football like in the United States. Instead, it is due to the fact that the Japanese people and politicians agree that industrial changes need to be made to save the environment. Hence the Kyoto Protocol agreed to in 1997 and in effect as of 2005 (Holroyd, 2011; Togo, 2010, 369-370).

The main theme of the program, however, is the problems facing the world in the years 2006-2008 (the years the team, led by Mizushima and Kuroda, developed *Gundam 00*’s two seasons) – specifically the issues of war, terrorism, “preventative war,” and peace. Like most Japanese, the creators of *Gundam 00* show profound distaste for the United States and its preventive war against Iraq; by October 2004, 71% of Japanese viewed the war in Iraq as a mistake (Midford, 2011, 128). In order to criticize U.S. preemptive war policy on Iraq and the war on terror during the anime’s first season, Mizushima and Kuroda used the secret private military organization Celestial Being and its avowed goal of ending war through military interventions and the threat of war as a stand in for U.S. military posturing, instead of the more obvious choice, the Union; and has the audience sympathize with the Gundam pilots and their goals as the show young heroes! Yet because Celestial Being is a small, secretive organization founded with assets of a rich, bearded man (Aeolia Schenber), that attacks military bases world-wide, some might mistake it for a futurist Al Queda. The evidence that it is an allegorical link to post-9/11 U.S. policy has to do with a few key factors. First, the show goes to pains to indicate that Celestial Being was founded over two hundred years earlier, just like the U.S.A. Its Gundam mobile suits are invisible to radar and are vastly technologically superior to any other weapons. Even masses of military equipment are no match to the
Gundams until all three power blocs decide to work together. The same overwhelming military power, at least on the technological level, fits the 21st century U.S. military forces. Celestial Being also has seeming unlimited funds to pour into its weapons and interventions; although the United States has taken on huge debt in the real world, it still spends more than what the next fifteen highest spending nations on earth spend all together on the military, forty-three percent of the world total or six times more than the second most profligate country (SIPRI, 2011). In episode 4, the Union president accuses Celestial Being of acting like a global police force, a role both friends and foes might sometimes attribute to the United States. Finally, using the term Celestial Being as the organization’s name shows God is on the side of the Gundam pilots. Claiming to be favored by God is also an unfortunate public proclamation sometimes used in American discourse on war (Weinstein & Seay, 2006; General who roared, 2003)--and when discussing many other issues, of course.

The basic plot of the first season involves the military interventions by Celestial Being in its quest to end war through war starting in 2307, even though the main characters in their Gundams understand and periodically discuss the paradox the process implies. Although by episode 14 (four months after the first intervention), there had been a marked decline in conflicts and corporations making military weapons due to fear of a violent intervention, Celestial Being’s actions have angered the three blocs to the extent that they begin to work together to defeat the technologically superior upstart. In addition, a sinister force within Celestial Being discards Schenberg’s mysterious plan to control the world, and hands out thirty pseudo-GN drives to help make the blocs successful. At the end of the first season, Celestial Being seems defeated and the Earth Sphere Federation born out of the combination of the Union, AEU, and HRL. A power behind the scenes, former agent for Celestial Being Ribbons Almark manipulates the Federation and rules behind the scenes for personal benefit. But instead of world peace, the Federation uses force to compel individual countries of the world to give up independence to foster an authoritarian one world government.

**Second Season**

In the second season, is broadcast six months later, but in *Gundam 00* the year is 2312. The Federation, a dictatorship by the few, has set up a group of Autonomous Peacekeepers called the A-LAWS. Its job is to keep the peace, but it also uses military force -- in fact any means necessary -- against smaller counties to get them to give up independence. Anyone who opposes them is considered a terrorist. War is all the more deadly and sorrowful for civilians caught up in the A-LAWS indiscriminant use of force. A group rises to meet the challenge of the Federation called Katharon, essentially a world-wide terror cell devoted to ending the tyranny of the Federation. Celestial Being seems defeated and the Earth Sphere Federation born out of the combination of the Union, AEU, and HRL. A power behind the scenes, former agent for Celestial Being Ribbons Almark manipulates the Federation and rules behind the scenes for personal benefit. But instead of world peace, the Federation uses force to compel individual countries of the world to give up independence to foster an authoritarian one world government.

**Two Binary Theories**

As a child, Setsuna faced the horrors of war as a member of the KPSA fighting the invasion by Azadistan. He turned to Celestial Being and its attack on war through war with vigor throughout the first half of the first season. Then he met Princess Marina Ismail, the head-of-state of Azadistan, the allegorical stand-in
for Iraq and Afghanistan (the latter in the second season, when the Federation destroyed the kingdom in order to force the lands into its control). At first contemptuous of her views – both because she was from Krugis’s conquering state and because she kept telling him that Celestial Being’s interventions were foolhardy. But he slowly became to admire Marina. Although Setsuna only knows war and fighting, he begins to question the very meaning of war and politics: “Why was the world so twisted?” (episode 14). Princess Marina criticizes the way Celestial Being attempts to stop the war through violence or threat of violence. “[Celestial Being is] a group of fanatics thinking they can stop war with force. Sure, war isn’t right, but the reality is that [civilians] are losing their lives in these unilateral interventions,” she argues in episode 8. “Countries have had their economies ruined. I wonder, do those people believe that they’re God.” Conflict, she claims, cannot be stopped through violence, only through understanding. Marina hopes Celestial Being will try talk to find peaceful solutions, rather than automatically resorting to violence as a form of persuasion. This clash of views is slowly won by Marina as the second season progresses, and shows the viewer the wrong-headedness of American preventative war. It is also part of the binary logic of opposites: masculine action (war) by Setsuna versus feminine action (talk) by Marina – what some men might categorize as non-action, according to recent feminist ethics writings on terrorism and war (Cohn & Riddick, 2004). And by the end of the second season, Setsuna has agreed with the logic of peace through understanding. “I think that people will change by thinking.” Gundam 00 writer Kuroda explains. “Setuna was changed because he acted after considering what he had learned. So, you should change by thinking, correct your incorrect beliefs, and go forward, something like that.” (Enomoto, 2009, 150).

The other important binarism in the series has to do with the young college student in Japan studying to become a space engineer with the odd name: Saji Crossroad. His sister, a top reporter for the Japanese News Network ends up learning too much about the shadowy figures around Celestial Being and is murdered (episode 20). His girlfriend loses her hand to an attack by a rogue Gundam, and ends up breaking his heart by pushing him away (episodes 18-20). Saji’s easy life is contrasted with the suffering of others. In the second season, he accidentally gets caught up in the struggle with the A-LAWS. By refusing to act or by acting selfishly, Saji dooms hundreds of men to death when he reveals the secret location of a Katharon base (episode 2.5). He is then confronted by Tieria, one of the most steadfast Gundam pilots, who blames Saji’s foolish actions for the lives lost. “It has nothing to do with me.” “It’s all happening in a different world,” Tieria furiously mocks in episode 2.6. “Turning away from reality like that is just a kind of inadvertent malice!” Saji vows to do better, but because he does not believe in war and is angry at Celestial Being (unfairly, it turns out) for his painful losses, he struggles to find something he can do. Eventually he serves as an engineer repairing the Gundams, as he makes a distinction between helping and actually fighting. He only later ventures out with the Gundam pilots to try to save his ex-girlfriend. As director Mizushima explains, Saji, while living as a student in Japan, had an almost perfect life; he had it so easy he could ignore the horrific events occurring around the world, like famine, war, and terrorism (Enomoto, 2009). Saji thus represents both the youth of Japan today and Japan as a nation. Japanese young people have begun to face inward, refusing to study abroad in the same numbers as the previous generation and not maintaining much interest in the world outside of Japan.

Even more important, however, is looking at Saji as Japan the nation. This is the other binarism, similar to the first: if not action through war, what kind of actions can be done to make the world a better place? Japan is like Saji’s family name: it is at a crossroad, or at least was in 2006-2008, during the making of the series. Japanese politicians had sent Self Defense Forces to Iraq in 2004. The Japanese public quickly became upset over this deployment, leading to their withdrawal in 2006. Attempts by the government to send the SDF to help reconstruct Afghanistan in 2007 were thwarted by a burst of public opinion against the move, the so-called Iraq Syndrome. Some saw this as Japan refusing its international obligations. Mizushima and Kuroda were no doubt trying to prevent Japan from behaving like a turtle on
the foreign relations’ stage and going back into its shell. The consequences of non-action can be as horrific as war itself. Luckily, Japanese foreign policy expert Paul Midford explains that Japanese skittish behavior was more out of a desire to avoid military confrontation under the United States; peaceful missions under United Nations’ authority would later meet with public approval (Midford, 2011).

**Film: *Awakening of the Trailblazer***
The 2010 film *A Wakening of the Trailblazer* was created to conclude the *Gundam 00* story. In the film, Earth Sphere Federation has been turned into a truly representative body. Problems still exist, such as mistreatment of people based on race or ethnicity and greed leading to murder or attempted murder, so Celestial Being remains to watch over Earth’s fragile peace. It turns out Schenberg’s plan was a bit larger in scope. Ending war was only the first step in a larger three-part plan. The goal was to unify the Earth so that when humanity met its first alien life forms, it could peacefully “dialogue” with them. Part of this dialogue would involve new humans called “Innovators” who, through science or natural selection, would develop the ability to communicate simply using telepathy, live longer lives, and have bodies built for space travel to distant worlds. But much sooner than scientist Schenberg predicted, an alien life-force comes from Jupiter, encounters humans, and heads toward Earth. This ELS (Extraterrestrial Living-metal Shapeshifter), forces the Federation and Celestial Being together to save humanity from this unimaginable threat, as the ELS form of communication seem like attacks on humans. It turns out the many exciting battles waged by the desperate humans in the end were pointless. Humanity’s “victory” in the film occurs only when Setsuna decides to communicate with the alien force instead of fighting it. By emphasizing the mutual understanding between humans and aliens, Marina’s ideals, a quote by Albert Einstein, becomes a reality: “Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding.”

**CONCLUSION**

Usually, anime directors and scenario writers are loath to explain the meaning behind the animation, willing to answer in detail only questions about the “hows” regarding the animation instead of the “whys.” In sharp contrast, Mizushima has clearly stated his intentions with *Gundam 00*. “When I was approached on this project, I pitched [to Sunrise] the idea of the war between a space monster and Gundam,” he explained (Enomoto, 2008, 119). The idea for the movie thus preceded the series. Apparently he did not feel that the Sunrise officials were much interested in his opening ideas, so he went back to discover what Gundam series really mean. “[A] Gundam series should be the story of war... [and therefore] creators needed to think about what the war really is. More than that, looking at war through winner and loser paradigms had been represented already through previous Gundam series. Then, I thought I should challenge convention to represent modern and multiple wars which include terrorism and on-going conflicts” (Enomoto, 2008, 119). Clearly, Mizushima has followed the conceptual framework Tomino has established with Gundam by promoting pacifism generally. The pacifism practiced by the director and writer have led some critics to charge *Gundam 00* with being preachy and with having a simplistic notion of obtaining peace. In part Mizushima agrees. “I do not think that I can come up with answers for the themes such as the extermination of warfare or the ways in which humans can learn to understand each other. If I could I would be able to get the Nobel Peace Prize!” he excitedly explained. “What I want to represent in 00 is not the answers of such difficult questions but the attitude for thinking about these themes deeply.” (Enomoto, 2009, 146).

Through a powerful plot, amazing visuals, and war machines (mobile suits) that could be recreated through fabulous model kits, Mizushima hoped that his not-so-hidden messages had been digested by his
Japanese audience. Although Mizushima, like most anime directors, probably thought only of providing ideas to his fellow-countrymen, ideas in *Gundam 00* no doubt found a ready audience in the U.S. tired of the endless wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He and his writer Kuroda argue throughout *Gundam 00* that attempts to end war through war are quixotic at best and stupidly destructive and counter-productive at worst, and show that one needs to be part of the world not apart from it.

**REFERENCES**


